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A Glittering Success for SWAPO

On November 15, 1989, the day after SWAPO's election victory in Namibia, the General Secretary of the South African Communist Party, Joe Slovo, sent the following message to SWAPO President Sam Nujoma:

The Central Committee and all members of the South African Communist Party send heartiest congratulations to you and the South West Africa People's Organisation on your magnificent victory in the elections to Namibia's Constituent Assembly. The struggle and sacrifice of the Namibian people have been rewarded with a glittering success, thanks to the patriotism, vision and leadership provided by SWAPO over the years since its formation.

SWAPO's triumph was achieved in the face of desperate resistance, brutal repression and colonialist machinations on the part of the racist South African regime, which pulled out every stop in its futile bid to hold back the tide of history. By this victory SWAPO has demonstrated to the whole world that it enjoys the confidence and support of the majority of the Namibian population.

The way is now open to the adoption of a democratic constitution and the installation in office of a SWAPO government which will have the power to wipe out racial oppression and discrimination, end the pillage of the economy by the forces of imperialism and neo-colonialism and create the conditions for the advancement of the living standards of all sections of the population on the basis of social justice and equality.

It is SWAPO's vision and courage which has brought about this transformation, your leadership which has mobilised the Namibian people for struggle and victory. Now you have opened the way to peace and social progress. Now you have the chance to build the Namibian nation of your dreams, for which so many of your members and supporters have fought and died.

Dear Comrades in SWAPO, today we all stand in your debt. Your victory is not only a triumph for you, but for all of us in the South African liberation movement. You have dealt a stunning blow to the apartheid regime in South Africa. Your victory will kindle in the breasts of all South African freedom fighters renewed confidence in the justice and victory of their cause. You have brought nearer the day when all southern Africa will belong to those who live in it, black and white.

There is still much to do. You have a constitution to adopt, a government to install, Walvis Bay to be recovered, the theft of your resources to be ended. We have a struggle to win, our land and people to be liberated. But events in both your country and ours show that we are well on the way.

Forward to new victories!

Long live friendship and co-operation between SWAPO and the SACP!

Long live peace and social progress!

Advance and Avoid the Traps!

Statement Issued by the Central Committee of the South African Communist Party.

THE SITUATION IS FULL OF PROMISE for a major advance. But it is also full of traps. And the key question facing all of us is how to guide the advance without falling into the traps.

In general, there are two extreme positions which spell danger for the future of our struggle. The one is to maintain that nothing has really changed. This would close our minds to certain tactical readjustments needed to build on the victories already scored. The other is to exaggerate the meaning of the changes. This could lead to an abandonment or toning down of those aspects of our strategy which made those victories possible and which will lay the basis for the ultimate victory.

The need therefore, to reflect on the relationship between our strategy and tactics in our developing situation has never been greater. It calls for both flexibility and adherence to principle.

It is plain that the regime's tactical approach has shifted. It is responding to mounting internal struggle and external pressures and its failure to contain and reverse the people's militancy. There is, however, no doubt that, in all essential respects, de Klerk's shift is designed to continue old policies by other means. **But merely to say this is not enough.** In order to assess the significance of the shift for our own tactical approaches, we need to go further.

Firstly, the fact that the regime is forced to change course, creates certain new conditions of struggle which cannot be ignored. Events have already shown that the "**new means**" have also opened **new space** for advance.

Secondly, we should not judge the effect of an enemy's initiatives solely by its intentions. History has shown over and over again that the objective results of an action often turn out to be the very opposite of what was intended.

6 • ADVANCE AND AVOID THE TRAPS!

In short, it is, above all, our responses which will play the key role in determining whether de Klerk's tactical readjustment will result in holding back or advancing our cause. We must undoubtedly make full use of whatever new space has opened. But in doing so, we must not be trapped into positions which will play into the regime's hands.

What are the main danger areas and how do we avoid them!

★ We must frustrate the regime's intention to trap us into substituting "legal" protest politics for active resistance, defiance and armed challenge. Both these terrains of struggle must be pursued with mounting vigour; they must not be treated as alternatives.

★ A new relationship is clearly beginning to emerge between legal and illegal work. But this should not tempt us to overlook the border-line between the two. **The style of our legal work must make it less easy for the regime to "justify" going back to its previous positions. At the same time, we must use the space won and even expand it without burning our strategic boats.** Legal and illegal work are both separate and inter-connected terrains of struggle. A clumsy collapse of the one into the other will do damage to both.

★ As yet, de Klerk is doing little more than experimenting with new safety valves to take the steam out of the militancy which the old methods failed to dampen. We need to prepare ourselves organisationally to meet a possible backlash and resist being lulled into pure "legalism". **The consolidation and strengthening of the underground and the spread of grass-roots people's organisation remains top priority.**

★ We have never rejected the possibility of meaningful negotiation. But it is political suicide to spread the illusion that this could come about through anything short of intensified struggle and pressure on all fronts. A key tactic in the regime's attempts to demobilise our people is to present de Klerk as a leader who has both the will and the capacity in the long run to "dismantle Apartheid". We must be on the alert to frustrate this deception in everything we say and do.

★ The recent outstanding gains in the international arena, including the widespread acceptance of the ANC-sponsored negotiating concept, must be consolidated and expanded. In particular, we must actively thwart pressures from Pretoria's allies, and even isolated tendencies among some of our friends, which objectively encourage the idea of "peace at any price". It is, of course, important to counter the enemy-fed slanders that we

are unreasonable and wild in the pursuit of our objectives. But in doing so we should not put at risk our image among our people as militants and revolutionaries.

★ We stand four-square behind the immediate objectives of the National Democratic Revolution. This will bring about a multi-party, non-racist democracy based on one person one vote, a mixed economy and constitutional safeguards for the social, cultural, linguistic and religious rights of all individuals. The struggle to achieve this calls for the broadest coalition of all class and democratic forces who support these aims and who are not hostile to the ANC and the Mass Democratic Movement.

We must also be on guard against the pseudo-revolutionaries who attempt to narrow the base of such a coalition. At the same time the working class and its political and mass organisations must maintain their independence and vigorously spread their ultimate perspective of socialism.

If a time ever arrives when the regime is ready to genuinely negotiate the process of moving to democracy as understood by the whole civilised world, it will come as a wonderful surprise. And if the preconditions for talks are met, a dialogue about the process may become possible. Until then there can be no retreat from our policy of mounting even greater pressures on all fronts of struggle, internal and external, legal and illegal.

There is nothing in the present situation which justifies a departure from the perspective of a seizure of power. We must skilfully use the new space to advance this perspective.



NO BREATHING SPACE FOR DE KLERK

THERE IS A NEW MOOD in the air in South Africa. Suddenly all things seem possible. The masses are on the move and their pressure is mounting. Perspectives of advance open up and targets come within reach which a year or so ago seemed unrealisable. The minds of the people are filled with optimism and excitement following the release from prison of Walter Sisulu and his comrades and their return to battle stations. The balance of forces in South Africa has demonstrably shifted in favour of the liberation movement.

Clearly we have reached a watershed in our history. Either we advance until we are within reach of our objective; or we go back to the lightless dungeons of emergency rule. It is largely up to us. The people have demonstrated, through the defiance campaign, the strikes and demonstrations, their magnificent turnout at the rally to welcome back their leaders, their flags and slogans, and in a thousand other ways in the recent period, that they are ready for action.

It is up to the liberation movement to determine in what direction and at what pace we move on from here. In *Julius Caesar* Shakespeare wrote:

There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat;
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.

But we must have no illusions. From time to time revolutionaries have to stop, in the middle of and while continuing struggle, to re-evaluate where they are on the road towards achievement of their goals. And they must read the signs honestly and correctly, not as they would like them to be. Our hopes must not lead us to distort reality.

If the conditions in which we struggle have altered significantly, we need to reassess what this change requires of us, what reactions we can anticipate from the enemy, how we can counter these, and generally how we can use the new conditions to raise the struggle to a higher level.

NOTHING NEW

For more than a year it has been evident that the apartheid regime is unable to offer any fresh initiative, any political plan with the slightest chance of satisfying the masses. Even the de Klerk statement announcing the release of Walter Sisulu and his comrades was coupled with a reference to the special weight that the views of puppet "leaders" in the bantustans and local authorities carried with him in making this decision. This reference reflects the extent to which the Nationalist government remains in the grip of policies and institutions that have been repeatedly and decisively rejected by the people.

It is clear that the government is not committed to the dismantling of apartheid. De Klerk himself has stated that "group rights", that is privileges of the white group, remain a cornerstone of their policy and that one person one vote is unacceptable.

Politically, then, the apartheid regime has nothing fresh to offer the people. What it has previously offered cannot be implemented, the successive states of emergency have shown, even through the barrel of a gun.

Ideologically there is a deep crisis in the apartheid state and in the white community generally. Gone are the days where whites assumed the semi-permanence of their overlordship over blacks. Not only do large sections of the white community doubt the possibility of continuing white domination, but many question its morality. Much of the current moral debate is found in media produced for the Afrikaans community, in theological columns, leader articles, cultural comment and published correspondence addressed to newspapers and magazines.

Many sections of the white Afrikaner community no longer wish to be identified, as a people and through their language, with the oppression of black South Africans. Many recognise that the future of the Afrikaans language can be guaranteed only through its being treated not as the exclusive preserve of whites, but as truly South African. The formation of Afrikaans democratic groupings is a movement towards linking their fortunes with those of the broader forces working for national liberation.

The moral crisis is sharpened by repeated evidence of deep-seated corruption. This has led to commissions of enquiry and the unseating of Ministers and government officials. There is no doubt that what has been published is merely the tip of the iceberg.

Economically, all South Africans are feeling the impact of semi-permanent stagnation and increasingly higher inflation. There is — even with the immediate relief through rescheduling of loans — little chance of the South African economy “taking off” into significant growth. One of the consequences is that the regime does not have the capital to finance its “reforms” especially in the critical area of black education.

The regime’s projection of the main state repressive agencies as “invincible” has been exposed as hollow through the military defeat at Cuito Cuanavale and, in the case of the “Law and Order” department, through the epic hunger strikes forcing the Minister to release hundreds of detainees.

Internationally, the apartheid state is more isolated than ever. With the exception of Thatcher's Britain, allies are few and far between. The Bush administration's more conciliatory approach towards democratic forces in South Africa has left Thatcher almost totally isolated in her support of apartheid South Africa.

THE FRUIT OF STRUGGLE

The crisis of the apartheid regime is a product not merely of internal disintegration but more fundamentally of the struggles of our people within and outside the country, in many and varied forms, and the international campaign to isolate and bring down the racist regime.

One of the most striking features of the continuing popular upsurge is the high level of political cohesion that has been manifested in statements of national leaders as well as the actions of ordinary rank and file activists.

De Klerk has been complimented for his statesmanship in banning sjamboks and allowing peaceful marches, but the truth is that the people left him with little option. In the course of their massive campaign of defiance, the people have themselves lifted many of the provisions of the emergency, so that the partial ending of the emergency which de Klerk promises is already achieved. The people have also unbanned the ANC and to a large extent the SACP.

The ideas of the ANC and the Communist Party are to be found everywhere. The people recognise the clarity of our strategy and its correctness as a guide to their actions. But ordinary people in their daily struggle are gaining insights from their own experience that are enriching our overall understanding of the struggle and how best it should be conducted.

The release of Walter Sisulu and other famous leaders, jailed in Rivonia and other trials, has provided a great impetus to the already massive popular upsurge. While de Klerk has seen advantages in their release (timed for the Commonwealth conference and to make the rescheduling of loans more palatable), he is undoubtedly fully aware of the dangers. Yet he cannot retreat by re-arresting Sisulu and others without conceding that the government rules only by repression. This would not only demonstrate the regime's political bankruptcy, but it could also possibly make the call for sanctions irresistible.

In facing the future the government confronts a number of unpleasant choices. In the forlorn hope that it can provide an acceptable political package to the people, the government must allow them to debate and if necessary reject what is offered and present their alternatives. But if this is not allowed, it is certain that the people will indicate that the ANC is their authentic representative. As part of the de Klerk gamble, the emergency may be lifted. But our people make no promises to de Klerk as to their response. They will use their right in order to raise the struggle to new heights.

It is our view that the crisis of the apartheid regime, together with a change on the part of the Nationalist Party leadership towards a preference for political rather than militaristic solutions (which was the main element of the P W Botha/F W de Klerk dispute), opens new opportunities for the masses struggling to end apartheid.

We may have entered a new phase where the energies of the masses can be deployed as an irresistible weapon against the enemy forces. The elements of "liberalisation" introduced by de Klerk should not be the only yardstick in assessing whether or not we are in a new phase of struggle. We believe that the more fundamental contradictions that limit the regime's capacity to move, internally and internationally, provide us with new opportunities to strike.

Whatever new "reforms" de Klerk may offer us, it is necessary to stress that "liberalisation", even if it proves to be a permanent feature of Nationalist rule, does not alter the basis on which we struggle. Every part of our liberation force will have to play its role to the full, in the period ahead. We still need to develop our underground and military force. We still need to continue with our propaganda, whether in underground units or in the open mass movements. The enemy must not be given any breathing space.

All our action must be aimed at ensuring that we raise the struggle to a new level and make the recovery of the apartheid state impossible. The movement towards a people's South Africa, a truly united, democratic and non-racial South Africa, must become irresistible.

WELCOME TO OUR LEADERS

THE FOLLOWING MESSAGES were sent to ANC leaders Walter Sisulu, Andrew Mlangeni, Elias Motsoaledi, Wilton Mkwayi, Ahmed Kathrada, Raymond Mhlaba and Oscar Mpetha following their release from prison:

From **President O.R. Tambo**, on behalf of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress —

Comrades, distinguished leaders of the ANC and the people of South Africa. I am particularly honoured to welcome you home after these long years of separation from your loved ones, friends, comrades and our own people.

On behalf of the National Executive Committee of the ANC, the tens of thousands of militants of our movement both inside and outside South Africa, and on my personal behalf, we salute the leaders of our people as they return to our midst.

Your outstanding bearing throughout the twenty six years of your incarceration will live on in the annals of our country and the struggle for freedom as shining examples of human courage and dedication. We have no doubt that your names will inspire generations of our people and all others who fight for human liberation. Your spirits, undimmed by the hardships of imprisonment, have kept alive the name of the ANC in the hearts and minds of our people. The Watchwords 'No Surrender' today so indelibly inscribed on the souls of our people owe much to the high standards you have set for us all.

A special word of tribute is owed also to our people — the workers of town and country, the intelligentsia, the women, the youth and students who have waged an unrelenting campaign for the release of our leaders.

Let there be no mistake. It is not a newly awakened sense of goodwill among the racists that has brought about these releases — de Klerk and his colleagues have been reluctantly compelled to take this step because of massive pressure at home and abroad. It is these campaigns, waged over two-and-a-half decades, with the support of virtually the entire international community, that have won us this victory.

Yet the unfinished tasks that remain before us are immense. Comrade Nelson Mandela, a devoted colleague and friend of long-standing, remains a prisoner. Scores of patriots shall spend today and those of the foreseeable future behind bars. Leading activists and militants of the Mass Democratic Movement are in detention. Close to 80 fighters, including captured MK combatants, are on death row awaiting execution. Except for some window-dressing, the key institutions of apartheid colonialism remain in place.

It was our united strength and determination that won us the freedom of our seven leaders. It is that same strength and determination that will free Nelson Mandela, all the other political prisoners and detainees and that will save our comrades from the gallows.

Let today's victory spur us on to even greater feats of courage and struggle. No force on earth can defeat our united people.

To our seven comrades I wish to say: Knowing you seven as well as I do I am certain you are all itching to get into the thick of the fray. We receive you with open arms and joyful hearts back into the fighting ranks of the movement you have served with such distinction.

As seasoned fighters who have seen many long years of service in the front line trenches, we are convinced that you shall find your rightful places in our multi-faceted struggle. We know that, as in the past, you will all excel in whatever tasks you undertake.

I embrace you individually and collectively and look forward to the day — now no longer so distant — when we shall meet face to face after so many years of separation.

Welcome Home, Comrades!
The Struggle Continues!
Victory is Certain!

From **Joe Slovo**, General Secretary of the South African Communist Party, to the Soweto rally on October 29, 1989 —

Comrades, On behalf of the South African Communist Party, on behalf of communists in the ranks of the working class, in the people's army, in the underground and in exile, on behalf of the

thousands of SACP supporters here in this stadium today, we embrace you. We are overjoyed to welcome you back amongst our people.

Your great devotion, self-sacrifice and dedication have deeply inspired all of us over these long years. Since that fateful Rivonia raid you have been in our thoughts unendingly. Everything we have tried to do has been bound up with the desire to free you. We have always seen your liberty as inseparable from the liberation of our people and our country.

It is clear what hand has opened the prison door. It is not de Klerk's. It is not Thatcher's. The force that has liberated you is none other than the masses of our country — struggling shoulder to shoulder and supported by the world-wide anti-apartheid movement. Over the last months, in mass defiance in the streets of the towns and cities of our country, our people have been unbanning the ANC and the SACP.

It is with pride that we have seen our Party's red flag flying side by side with the black, green and gold of our national liberation movement. The symbol expresses the indestructibility of our historic alliance. It also expresses a growing desire by our working people to end not only oppression but also the exploitation of man by man. The achievement of a truly democratic South Africa remains the immediate aim shared by all of us. Such a South Africa will create conditions enabling our working people to work for a socialist future.

Comrades, as our released leaders assume their place once more in the active leadership of our revolutionary movement, history confronts us with the next crucial steps.

Let us ensure that de Klerk's tactical retreat is turned into a headlong flight. Let us ensure that the regime is unable to move back in good order to the next set of apartheid trenches. The situation demands an all-round intensification of struggle.

Above all, let us ensure that our victory, which is now ripening and within reach, does not turn out to be hollow fruit. To this end we must ensure the ever more active mobilisation and political organisation of our country's working class. It is a class which, in its millions, stands in the forefront of the struggle for a unified, non-racial South Africa; a South Africa in which democracy will be brought about to its fullest extent.

The alliance of the working class with those on the land and all other patriotic forces will undoubtedly fulfil the finest collective aspirations of our whole nation. It is this unity expressed in the revolutionary alliance headed by the ANC and embracing organised workers and the whole mass democratic movement which will put an end to racism in all its forms.

Comrades, in the crucial months ahead we shall be greatly strengthened by the presence of our released leaders in our midst. Together let us spare no effort in the struggle to release our comrade Nelson Mandela and all other political prisoners.

LONG LIVE THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS!

LONG LIVE THE SACP!

LONG LIVE OUR UNBREAKABLE REVOLUTIONARY ALLIANCE!

VICTORY IS CERTAIN!

THE CLASS STRUGGLE IS ALIVE AND KICKING

LET THERE BE NO MISTAKE about it — the international class struggle is being waged today with all possible intensity by the forces of imperialism who believe that the crisis of identity now besetting some socialist countries spells the end of communism. The imperialist media are making full use of this opportunity to spread disinformation with the aim of sowing division and confusion in the ranks of the anti-imperialist forces world-wide.

In the recent period the Soviet campaigns associated with the terms *perestroika* and *glasnost* have provided the enemies of socialism with plenty of ammunition. The cost-accounting

procedures now being advocated in the Soviet Union, together with Margaret Thatcher's statement that she can "do business with Gorbachev", have been interpreted by the bourgeois media as proof that the Soviet Union is going capitalist. And the revelations of *glasnost* have been used by the bourgeois and even some Soviet media as an excuse to concentrate attention on only the negative features of Soviet development. Developments in some other socialist countries, notably Poland, Hungary and the G.D.R., have also been interpreted as betraying a loss of confidence even in the ranks of the Communist parties about the future of socialism. In response to this ideological offensive by the imperialists, perhaps it is necessary to restate a few first principles.

Let us first quote from *The Communist Manifesto* of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels:

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles..... Oppressor and oppressed stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes...."

"The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of old ones".

In the 142 years since *The Communist Manifesto* was published, that basic analysis of capitalist society has not altered. No matter what happens to the existing socialist countries, capitalism has failed and will continue to fail to end class struggle and oppression and the fight for socialism will continue.

LOYALTY TO SOCIALISM

But, secondly, no matter how serious the problems confronting the socialist countries today, there is no reason to believe that the only outcome is a reversion to capitalism. Certainly, that is not the intention of most of the protagonists of reform. In an address to representatives of the Chinese public in Beijing on May 17, 1989, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev explained:

"The whole concept of *perestroika* is based on loyalty to the socialist cause, for which our people opted in October 1917.

"It is no secret that people in the West, who show tremendous interest towards our *perestroika*, the reforms in China and similar processes in other socialist countries are now wondering to what extent those processes represent a development of socialism and to what extent a retreat from it. Some are not hiding their hopes that the introduction of cost-accounting, market incentives, *glasnost* and democracy will lead, if not to the restoration of capitalism, then to some mixed form of social order.

"Such expectations are based on a mistaken assumption that economic incentives and democracy belong exclusively to capitalism. In reality these are merely methods for regulating social relations developed by mankind over the centuries. They may be used in various social systems, of course with due regard for their specific characteristics.

"We are convinced that socialism can, and indeed will, ensure the harmonious combination of economic and political democracy, social protection of man and his freedoms. It is that goal that we have in mind in all our efforts to renew our society."

Similarly the newly elected General Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SUPG), Egon Krenz, in his first speech to the people of the German Democratic Republic on radio and television on October 25, 1989, stressed that the object of the reforms the government proposed to introduce was to strengthen, not to weaken socialism. Admitting that "in the past few months we have not yet assessed the essence of social developments in our country realistically enough and drawn the correct conclusions in time", he said the party "stood by the achievements, values and ideals of socialism" and was determined to regain the initiative. And he added:

"There is no reason to belittle what has been achieved and question it only because that which has not been achieved raises new questions".

G.D.R. HISTORY

In the wake of the breaching of the Berlin wall last November, it is perhaps worth thinking about what socialism has meant to the people of the GDR. The Soviet Union and the GDR are often blamed for the division of Germany and Europe and the creation of the tensions which threaten peace. At the end of the war Germany was a devastated land, with four zones of occupation controlled respectively by the US, Britain, France and the Soviet Union. The communists in all zones set themselves the task of working for a united socialist Germany, but it was the Western

powers who brought about the division of the country when on May 23, 1949, the Federal Republic was formed and in September of the same year the country's President and Chancellor were elected and the FRG government installed with its capital at Bonn.

It was only in reply to this unilateral action that the German Democratic Republic was formed on October 7, 1949. Berlin, the capital of pre-war Germany, remained under four-power occupation because the Western powers were not willing to relinquish their hold on this strategic territory in the heartland of the GDR.

From the outset the Western powers set out to build up the FRG. The allied pledge to "destroy German militarism and nazism and to ensure that Germany will never again be able to disturb the peace of the world" was disregarded. The monopolies which had helped to build up Hitler were resuscitated, money was poured into the FRG under the Marshall Plan, denazification was largely ignored, and every attempt was made to destabilise and bankrupt the GDR. The western zones of Berlin were used to undermine the economic and political structures of the GDR, which in self-defence felt compelled to erect the Berlin wall to seal itself off from infection on August 13, 1961.

The Soviet Union gave the GDR what assistance it could, but was burdened with the immense task of rebuilding its own devastated land. Meanwhile the western powers, especially the USA which was comparatively untouched by the war, bolstered the FRG in every possible way and had immense resources at their disposal. It is their aid which made possible the so-called "economic miracle" of which the FRG boasts.

The GDR was founded in the least developed area of Germany. New industries had to be set up and a labour force trained from scratch; a new political and social consciousness had to be developed. How successfully this task was accomplished by socialist methods may be gauged from the fact that already by the end of the 1960s the GDR was numbered among the ten most industrially developed countries in the world. The achievements of its citizens in the spheres of culture and sport are legendary. Living standards in the GDR are the highest in the socialist world, with impressive achievements in the spheres of housing, health

and education. Shopping queues are virtually unknown, though the range of goods available is more limited than in the FRG.

Material goods are of course not the only standard of measurement. Throughout its development the GDR has had to compete with an FRG outwardly more prosperous though with infinitely greater social divisions, but buttressed by a powerful propaganda apparatus constantly beaming invitations across the border. Invitations backed with cash. The exodus which accompanied the 40th anniversary celebrations of the GDR last October were not accidental. They were planned in meticulous detail by the FRG, which laid on the tents and food and job promises and all the rest of it with military precision and saw to it that the media were on hand to record everything for the greater glory of capitalism.

The lure of the FRG is not inconsiderable. Its territory is more than twice that of the GDR, its population three times as large, the resources at its disposal relatively greater. Nor does it serve any purpose to deny that the GDR has problems, some of them stemming from the very division of the country which creates a sort of schizophrenia similar to that which afflicts the children of divorced parents. And then there is the problem of the bureaucracy which seems to plague all the socialist countries.

WHAT IS FREEDOM

Yet the so-called "refugees" who left the GDR for the FRG did not look like the victims of persecution we have seen in other parts of the world. They were well-fed and well-dressed, many had cars. Perhaps the most striking thing about them was that most were young. Many said that what they wanted from their escapade was "freedom". No doubt freedom to travel was high on their agenda — and has been placed high on the reform agenda announced by the SUPG since Krenz took over from Honecker as general secretary. Other pledges have been made to improve economic performance, provide better quality goods, more democracy, freer elections, more realistic and lively media and a more healthy environment.

It is noteworthy that many of those who stayed behind to take part in street demonstrations in support of their demand for reform stressed that they were not opposed to socialism and did not want its replacement by capitalism. But clearly the majority of

the GDR population do want reform of the Communist Party as well as the institutions of state. In all the socialist countries today the extent to which the Communist parties are able to perform a vanguard role in society depends on their ability to democratise themselves and win the support of the people through deeds rather than words. One of the most hopeful features of developments in the Soviet Union has been that avenues have been opened up, both in the Party and in the soviets, through which the people can not only express themselves but also participate, and be seen to participate, in the making of policy and the implementation of decisions. Both "reformers" and "conservatives" are making use of these facilities, using the constitution to change the constitution, and in the process enhancing the authority of both the soviets and the Party.

In the GDR there still exists a minority of people who are not reconciled to the socialist perspective, and who hanker for the reunification of Germany on the basis of capitalism. The Bonn correspondent of the *Independent* newspaper, Patricia Clough, wrote last October:

"Christian Democrat politicians point to polls showing that a comfortable majority of refugees in West Germany would vote for the CDU, an indication of conservative and therefore reunification-friendly views." (21.10.89)

The issue of emigration from the GDR is not a new one. The GDR has been steadily increasing the number of exit permits issued to GDR citizens, and in 1989 more people left the GDR legally than illegally by the back door. But the vast majority of GDR citizens see no reason to leave their homeland, and that includes the vast majority of the disaffected, who have indicated that rather than seek illusory paradise abroad they will stay to fight for change at home.

It is also a fair bet that a considerable number of those who leave the GDR will become disillusioned with the FRG and want to return home again. The FRG is not genuinely interested in the promotion of universal human values. On the issue of sanctions it sides with the de Klerk regime in South Africa against the wishes of the majority of the population; and it takes up a distinctly restrictive attitude towards its "guest workers" from countries like Turkey and Yugoslavia, in contrast to its welcome for the

“refugees” from the GDR, who are considerably better off — and FRG attitudes towards the latter began to harden as their number increased, exposing critical FRG shortages and shortcomings in the spheres of housing, employment and welfare. As long ago as 1970 the Bonn correspondent of the London *Times* Roger Berthoud wrote an article about the problems of GDR citizens in West Germany which his paper published under the headline: “Refugees Disenchanted with ‘Freedom’”. The first sentence read:

“The complacent assumption of westerners that refugees from communist regimes east of the Elbe find life in the West a bed of roses is by no means always justified, as anyone with experience in this field will confirm..... This may be particularly true of east Germans who have fled to West Germany”. (4.4.70)

When the Berlin wall was breached last November and thousands celebrated in the streets, a question mark was raised in the media over the future of socialism in the G.D.R. — and everywhere else for that matter. Perhaps those who were gleefully proclaiming its demise will have to think again.

Socialism will take many forms, depending on the context. The Soviet Union has in recent times insisted on the right of each country to choose its own road to socialism.

Responding to the demands of President Bush and his Western cohorts that the Soviet Union should tear down the Berlin Wall before it can be admitted to the European home, Gorbachev said in his Berlin speech last October:

“First of all, our western partners ought to proceed from the fact that issues concerning the GDR are solved not in Moscow but in Berlin.”

Gorbachev was speaking at a time when thousands of so-called “refugees” were streaming across the borders of the GDR, via Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, to West Germany, and when thousands of GDR citizens were demonstrating in the streets of Berlin, Leipzig and Dresden in support of their demand for “reform” He didn’t pretend ignorance, but said pointedly:

“We have no doubt that the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, with its intellectual potential, rich experience and political prestige, will be able together with all public forces to find the answers to questions raised by the country’s development and worrying its citizens.

“Strictly speaking, this concerns primarily tapping potentialities inherent in the socialist system, the system of workers’ and people’s government”.

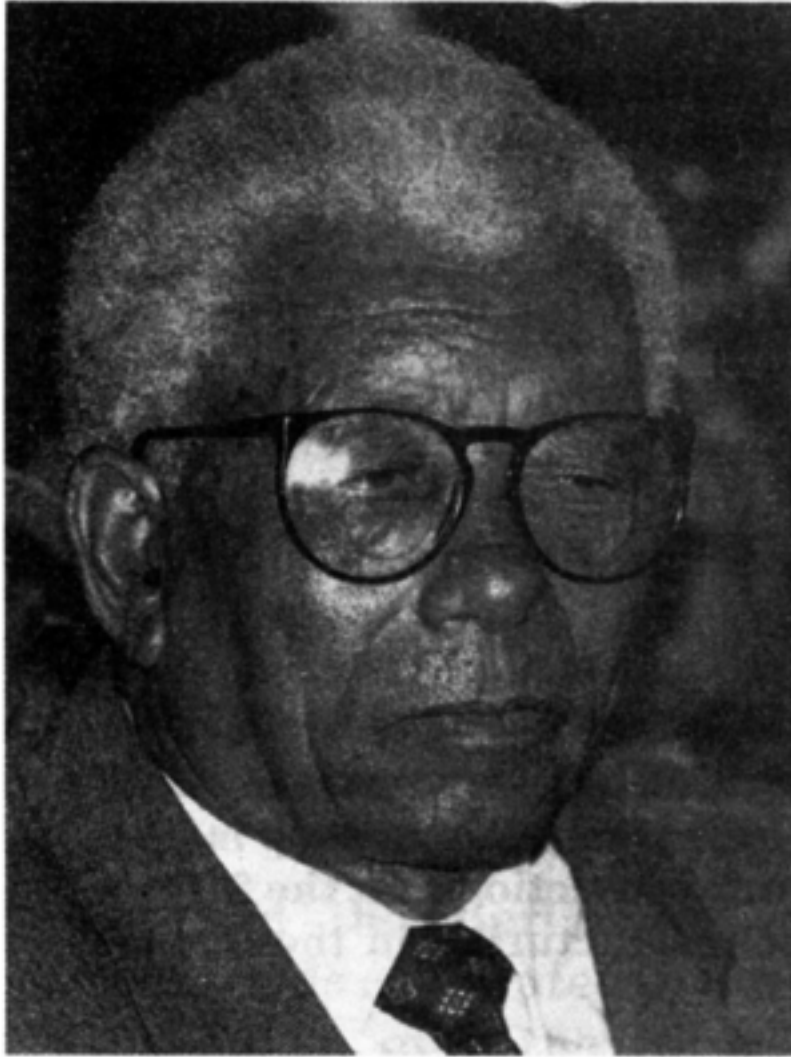
Not everybody in the ruling parties of the socialist countries has been in accord over the issue of *perestroika*. Some have been afraid that the socialist baby might be thrown out with the bathwater. When Egon Krenz was appointed general secretary of the SUPG in succession to Erich Honecker, he said in his first radio and television address that *perestroika* in the Soviet Union was an “inevitable process”, adding

“Such a process was naturally accompanied by phenomena causing concern, but such concern was also an expression of our deep moral commitment to the Soviet Union and of our conviction that the future of socialism hinged on the successes of restructuring in the Soviet Union”.

We in the international Communist movement share this concern and commitment, not only in relation to the Soviet Union but also in relation to the GDR itself and indeed other socialist countries. Today, when the GDR is being destabilised, let us recall the magnificent service it has rendered in the sphere of solidarity to many liberation movements including our own, as well as to Mozambique, Cuba, Angola, Vietnam, Campuchea and a host of other detachments in the front line of struggle for socialism.

When we have needed aid, it has been given without stint in the finest spirit of proletarian internationalism. Today, let us seek ways in which we can repay some of this debt to our comrades. The future of socialism hinges on our successes on every front.

WE WELCOME OUR LEADERS



WALTER SISULU



AHMED KATHRADA



ELIAS MOTSOALEDI



RAYMOND MHLABA



ANDREW MLANGENI



WILTON MKWAYI

OSCAR MPETHA



Talking About Talks

by Phineas Malinga

The Politics of Negotiations

The new programme of the South African Communist Party, *The Path To Power*, adopted at the Seventh Congress in 1989, devotes its sixth and final chapter to the way in which the people will overthrow apartheid and create their own government.¹

THAT CHAPTER BEGINS by summarising the changes in methods of struggle during the long history of the national liberatory movement. It recalls the historic decision to launch the armed struggle in 1961. It describes the difficulties which the armed struggle has encountered and the achievements in spite of those difficulties. It acknowledges that there was a time when "there developed a tendency to focus too exclusively on military activities. We did not always pay sufficient attention or devote the necessary resources to political work itself." That tendency, however, has been corrected. The programme summarises the present approach as follows:

"Our approach to the relationship between military and other forms of political struggle is guided by the theory of Marxism-Leninism, the experiences of other revolutionary struggles and, above all, our own concrete realities. We communists believe that the struggle must always be given forms appropriate to the concrete political situation. It is this situation which determines whether the revolutionary transformation can be achieved by military or non-military struggle or by a blend of both."

Going on to examine the concrete situation which now exists, the programme makes this fundamental assessment:

“The situation has within it the potential for a relatively rapid emergence of conditions which make possible seizure of power.”

This theme is further examined and the possibility of mass insurrection discussed. The discussion leads to this conclusion:

“Seizure of power will be a product of escalating and progressively merging mass political and military struggle with the likelihood of culminating in an insurrection.”

Likelihood, however, is not the same thing as certainty. The programme does not commit itself to a single perspective for the future but makes it clear that the Party retains the capacity to respond flexibly to a variety of possible future situations. Among the possibilities examined is that, at some stage, negotiations may take place between the liberation movement and representatives of the present ruling class. The programme deals with this topic as follows:

“Prospects of a Negotiated Transfer of Power

“There is no conflict between the insurrectionary perspective and the possibility of a negotiated transfer of power. There should be no confusion of the strategy needed to help create the conditions for the winning of power with the exact form of the ultimate breakthrough. *Armed struggle cannot be counterposed with dialogue, negotiation and justifiable compromises, as if they were mutually exclusive categories.* Liberation struggles have rarely ended with the unconditional surrender of the enemy’s military forces. Every such struggle in our continent has had its climax at the negotiating table, occasionally involving compromises judged to be in the interests of revolutionary advance. But whether there is an armed seizure of power or negotiated settlement, what is indisputable to both is the development of the political and military forces of the revolution.

“We should be on our guard against the clear objective of our ruling class and their imperialist allies who see negotiation as a way of pre-empting a revolutionary transformation. The imperialists seek their own kind of transformation which goes beyond the reform limits of the present regime but which will, at the same time, frustrate the basic objectives of the struggling masses. *And they hope to achieve this by pushing the liberation movement into negotiation before it is strong enough to back its basic demands with sufficient power on the ground.*

“Whatever prospects may arise in the future for a negotiated transition, they must not be allowed to infect the purpose and content of our present strategic approaches. *We are not engaged in a struggle whose objective is merely to generate sufficient pressure to bring the other side to the negotiating table.* If, as a result of a generalised crisis and heightened revolutionary upsurge, the point should ever be reached when the enemy is prepared to talk, the liberation forces will, *at that point*, have to exercise their judgement, guided by the demands of revolutionary advance. But until then its sights must be clearly set on the perspectives of a seizure of power.”

Two Errors

This passage from the programme puts us on guard against two errors. The first error is that of the sincere but simple-minded militant who thinks that once armed struggle has been started, it is shameful to think in terms of stopping it anywhere short of unconditional surrender by the enemy. The emotions which struggle unleashes always lead some elements into this error. Whether it is a question of settling a strike or a local boycott or the far larger question of the future of the country as a whole, there are always some who automatically cry “sell-out!” as soon as the possibility of a negotiated solution is mentioned.

Such people usually have their hearts in the right place but they do not understand the processes by which history moves forward. The dialectical process produces a synthesis, not the total disappearance of one conflicting force and its simple replacement by another. Even an overwhelming military victory does not mean that the enemy disappears from the face of the earth. The human beings who made up the enemy forces must still be dealt with and in the final analysis they must be dealt with politically. There is always a point at which the shooting stops and the talking starts. Where that point should be is a matter for decision in each struggle separately, on the merits of the situation.

The other error, as the Programme makes clear, is one into which our enemies are deliberately trying to lead us. A negotiations bandwagon has been rolling for some time now. Among the first on board it were centre-left white organisations such as the Progressive Federal Party and reactionary black organisations such as Inkatha. At the “Natal Indaba” they floated the idea of a so-called compromise settlement which was in fact an elaborate scheme to avoid majority rule while appearing to concede the principle of one person one vote.²

Another early and prominent passenger on the bandwagon has been the British government. It is keen to preserve the capitalist system in South Africa and to justify its own refusal to join the majority of the world in applying sanctions against apartheid.

Shift of Emphasis

Under the leadership of P.W. Botha, the South African government kept its distance, rejecting the Natal Indaba ideas and condemning those outside the ranks of the liberation movement who sought dialogue with the movement. There has, however, been a significant shift of emphasis since F.W. de Klerk took over. It is clearly a part of his strategy to hold out the prospect that there will be changes in South Africa and that the content of these changes should be the subject of discussion. The question of where, when, with whom and on what subjects he is prepared to talk is kept obscure.

He has not conceded the very first point which must be conceded before he can be taken seriously — that the African National Congress will be the spokesman for the people in any negotiation. In other words there is nothing, from his side, on the table yet. All that he is doing is trying to create an atmosphere for negotiation.

For what purpose? To dismiss it all as a propaganda exercise, devoid of serious content, would be a mistake. De Klerk has every reason to be serious about changing the disastrous Botha constitution. His position is weaker in every respect than that of his predecessors in office. His command of the white electorate is slipping. The economic situation goes from bad to worse. The growth of the free trade union movement has transformed the industrial scene to his disadvantage. Above all, he has to face the fact that the most extreme methods have been tried in order to suppress the liberation movement, but have failed. ANC meetings and demonstrations are held more openly now than before the state of emergency was imposed. Walter Sisulu and other political prisoners have had to be released.

Therefore de Klerk has to try something new. On the other hand, he is still in command of a formidable state machine which remains integrated with the world imperialist system. There is no reason to suppose that he is on the point of surrender. Here is the basis of the SACP Programme's analysis of the enemy strategy. The enemy aims at a "compromise" settlement which will preserve the essentials of the present system and this is to be achieved by pushing the liberation movement into premature negotiations — negotiations at a stage when the balance of power still remains with the

regime. The Programme is undoubtedly correct in warning us against the danger of falling into that trap.

Would it then be correct for the movement to show no interest at all, at the present time, in the subject of negotiations? Before we can answer that question, we must take certain further facts into account.

Namibian Example

Firstly, there have actually been negotiations with the South African regime over Namibia. The results are problematic in some respects. We do not yet know how favourable the final outcome will be for the Namibian people. Nevertheless, a radically new situation has been created. The liberation movement has new opportunities and new spheres of action. Nobody argues that the negotiations were a sham or that SWAPO has fallen into a trap.

The second point is connected with the first. The Namibian negotiations were one of the products of a change in the atmosphere of world politics. Thanks to a series of initiatives by the Soviet Union, substantial progress has been made in the direction of world peace. It is the policy of the Soviet Union to seek solutions to regional conflicts and that policy has met with a response from other governments, none of whom can insulate themselves from the world-wide popular demand for peace.

Our struggle, of course, cannot in itself be characterised as a “regional conflict”. It is a political conflict, internal to South Africa. It has, however, given rise to a regional conflict. The front-line states have had to pay a heavy price for their generous and loyal support of our liberation movement. From their point of view, there is a regional conflict and they have every right to desire as early a settlement of that conflict as can be achieved.

It follows that the trap mentioned above is not the only one into which our movement risks falling. De Klerk’s negotiation propaganda could pay dividends for him even if it fails to lure the movement into a premature negotiation. This will be the case if de Klerk succeeds in presenting himself to the world as the man of peace, whose efforts to reach a settlement are being frustrated by a bunch of ANC warmongers, interested only in sacrificing human lives to their own ambitions. Such a propaganda coup could deprive us of crucial allies, both within the country and internationally.

The OAU Declaration

It was therefore not sufficient for the liberation movement simply to ignore the issue of negotiations. To do so would be to put the movement into a false position, capable of being exploited by the enemy. The movement had to take

up a clear position. Such a position has in fact been taken. The meeting of the OAU Ad-Hoc Committee on Southern Africa, held in Harare on 21 August 1989, adopted a declaration which had been proposed to it by the ANC.

A reader coming from the SACP Programme to the OAU declaration is likely, at first impression, to experience a sense of shock. The tone of the two documents seems very different. The OAU declaration begins as follows:

“1.0 The people of Africa, singly, collectively and acting through the OAU, are engaged in serious efforts to establish peace throughout the continent by ending all conflicts through negotiations based on the principle of justice and peace for all.”

Further on, the section of the declaration headed “Statement of Principles” begins with this paragraph:

“14.0 We believe that a conjuncture of circumstances exists which, if there is a demonstrable readiness on the part of the Pretoria regime to engage in negotiations genuinely and seriously, could create the possibility to end apartheid through negotiations. Such an eventuality would be an expression of the long-standing preference of the majority of the people of South Africa to arrive at a political settlement.”

Can this be right?, the reader may ask. Is it not over-optimistic? Is the OAU not falling into the trap against which the Party Programme warns us?

The reader must read on.

The Statement of Principles, the beginning of which is quoted above, goes on to propose the following fundamental objectives to be pursued by a possible negotiation:

“South Africa shall become a united, democratic and non-racial state. All its people shall enjoy common and equal citizenship and nationality, regardless of race, colour, sex or creed.

“All its people shall have the right to participate in the government and administration of the country on the basis of a universal suffrage, exercised through one person one vote, under a common voters’ roll.

“All shall have the right to form and join any political party of their choice, provided that this is not in furtherance of racism.

“All shall enjoy universally recognised human rights, freedoms and civil liberties, protected under an entrenched Bill of Rights.

“South Africa shall have a new legal system which shall guarantee equality of all before the law.

“South Africa shall have an independent and non-racial judiciary.

"There shall be created an economic order which shall promote and advance the well-being of all South Africans.

"A democratic South Africa shall respect the rights, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries and pursue a policy of peace, friendship, and mutually beneficial co-operation with all peoples."

These principles are clearly derived from the Constitutional Guidelines published by the ANC in 1988, which in turn are based on the Freedom Charter. Two points are particularly important in the present context. The future state is to be *united* and the franchise is to be *under a common voters' roll*. This indicates that there is to be no discussion of schemes for the balkanisation of South Africa or for the placing of certain voters on separate rolls in order to put them into a position to exercise rights of veto over the will of the majority. A variety of diversionary tactics which would be likely to be injected into a negotiation with an ill-defined agenda are thus ruled out.

The document does not stop there. It continues with the following crucial section:

"III. Climate for Negotiations

"Together with the rest of the world, we believe that it is essential, before any negotiations can take place, that the necessary climate for negotiations be created. The apartheid regime has the urgent responsibility to respond positively to this universally acclaimed demand and thus create this climate.

"Accordingly, the present regime should, at the very least:

"Release all political prisoners and detainees unconditionally and refrain from imposing any restrictions on them;

"Lift all bans and restrictions on all proscribed and restricted organisations and persons;

"Remove all troops from the townships;

"End the state of emergency and repeal all legislation, such as, and including the Internal Security Act, designed to circumscribe political activity; and,

"Cease all political trials and executions.

"These measures are necessary to produce the conditions in which free political discussion can take place — an essential condition to ensure that the people themselves participate in the process of remaking their country. The measures listed above should therefore precede negotiations."

The final sentence must be noted carefully. What we have here are not subjects to be discussed in a negotiation. They are conditions to be fulfilled before negotiations begin. The significance of these conditions is neither symbolic nor theoretical. These are not just things which the South African government could do to create an atmosphere of goodwill. They are conditions, the fulfilment of which would materially change the balance of power. Particularly crucial is number four — “*Remove all troops from the townships.*” Why were the troops sent into the townships? They were sent to stop the growth of alternative centres of power. In the mid-eighties, these centres were sprouting up like mushrooms; the beginnings of people’s power were visible on the streets. Martial law has slowed that process down. The moment martial law is lifted, that process will resume, more strongly than ever. Under such conditions, the liberation movement would be negotiating from a position of strength.

The ANC has, therefore, correctly identified a set of conditions adequate to guard against the danger described in the Party Programme. A negotiation embarked upon after the fulfilment of these conditions would not be one embarked upon before the liberation movement is strong enough to back its basic demands with sufficient power on the ground. Although the first impression made by the OAU Declaration may be different from that made by the Party Programme, the two documents are, upon analysis, perfectly compatible.

The Way Forward

The conditions in the OAU Declaration, quoted above, have now become part of the common immediate programme around which the ANC has called for a powerful united front of anti-apartheid forces to rally. That call was made shortly after the adoption of the Declaration by the OAU.

The regime, of course, is unlikely to have any illusions about the significance of the conditions which have been laid down. They are not the conditions which F.W. de Klerk at present has in mind for his version of negotiations. Therefore negotiations are not imminent. This was the conclusion reached by Comrade Thabo Mbeki, ANC secretary for international affairs, after his meeting with a group of Afrikaners headed by the President’s brother.¹

The prospect for the immediate future, therefore, is the continuation of the struggle by all means. The regime’s weakness must be exploited and its crisis deepened. It is not possible to predict the regime’s reaction. As the loss of power looms closer, a lurch into yet more extreme forms of repression

cannot be ruled out. If that happens, the movement will resist as it has always resisted. If, however, the demands of the common immediate programme are achieved and under those conditions an offer to negotiate further steps forward is forthcoming, the struggle may then move into a new phase. That is the purpose for which the OAU Declaration was drawn up.

References

1. See *African Communist* No. 118, pp. 115-127.
2. See *African Communist* No 110, p. 72.
3. See statement of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress on the current situation, issued in Lusaka, 22 September 1989.
4. As reported in *The Times*, London, 7 October 1989.



“A SINGLE SPARK CAN START A VELD FIRE”

The Perspectives of the Armed Seizure of Power

by Tebogo Kgope

The ultimate goal for the national liberation struggle is the seizure of power by the people, the destruction of white racist domination in all its forms, and the building of a united, democratic South Africa based on the Freedom Charter.

THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION led by the African National Congress is a political struggle to wrest power from the minority regime by the masses of the oppressed people.

Political struggles can assume many forms, depending on given concrete historical conditions. The forms can be parliamentary or extra-parliamentary or embrace elements of both. They can range from the most peaceful to the violent, from the most spontaneous to the most organised. But formulating our goal as we have done readily indicates our general strategic perception and implies side-lining of some forms.

Seizure is a forceable act. It is clear immediately we talk about seizure that we envisage struggle entailing varying degrees of force. There can be no peaceable or friendly seizure. It should follow then that parliamentary forms, apart from those of “putchist” or like design, fall outside the category of forms aiming at seizure. As Le Duan says: “... under all circumstances, the

road to power lies in revolution, not reform.” (Le Duan, *The Vietnamese Revolution*, Foreign Languages Publishing Press, Hanoi, P57). Yet other extra-parliamentary forms can have a reformist and not a revolutionary content.

Revolutionaries do not reject certain forms in principle but may as a policy. Nothing is taboo except immobility. What forms are adopted and which are excluded depends on the concrete conditions. Conditions also determine what forms become the main and which are secondary, and their relative importance fluctuates on the time scale. The stated goal in general identifies the main.

What, therefore, are the main forms that our movement identifies? The first is mass mobilisation. It aims at militant and united mass action for central government power. Passivity does not contribute towards seizure of power. Negotiations for power are not part of an agenda to increase the militancy of the masses. Negotiations can only be conducted from a position of strength derived from militant action and other revolutionary activity by the oppressed.

If at any point in the recent period the enemy seemed on the point of considering a negotiated solution due to pressure from its backers both inside and outside the country, it was not because of sweet talk, but because of the gathering momentum of militant action by the masses. If the masses of our people in certain quarters have been negotiating with the regime's representatives and councillors over certain issues, it is not, as certain people would have us believe, a vindication of the strategy of negotiations. It is because our people, through militant action, have won a certain measure of real power that forces the regime and its puppets to negotiate with them.

This militancy must express itself in every form and at every turn. And the primary duty of the political worker is that this militancy should grow from day to day, from campaign to campaign, in ever widening terrain, until it has reached a point and a scale where confrontation becomes a point of no return, and general insurrection breaks out.

This militant action of the masses can be peaceful or violent; it can be legal, semi-legal or illegal. At one moment, the masses can be taking part in a placard demonstration, a peaceful wage strike or attending a mass rally; at another they could be erecting barricades and digging trenches to trap and fight enemy vehicles entering the townships, or dismissed workers can be destroying factory machinery or burning crops, or the people can be physically attacking the enemy's agents and collaborators. Some of this will be spontaneous and some will be organised.

In structural terms, mass mobilisation is effected through legal and illegal forms. It is therefore not the hegemonic preserve of the mass democratic movement operating legally but moreso that of the vanguard movement operating from underground. The banning of the vanguard movement of the oppressed people, the ANC, and its decision to go underground, meant that the fundamental forms of resistance shifted from the legal to the illegal. This position has not changed. Revolutionaries can ignore this basic approach only at their own peril. The rich and turbulent history of the period roughly from 1976-1986 provides sufficient proof of the validity of this approach.

During this period, tremendous advances were made by the legal mass movement in increasing the militancy of the masses. The period will certainly go down in the annals of our history as one in which the politicisation and the militancy of our people reached new unprecedented heights. The legal mass movements played an important role in this. But since these organisational forms are conducted in the open, they are more exposed to the enemy attack. So while more rapid advances can be made in the short term through open agitation and propaganda, a movement can suffer more durable disabilities from a vicious counter-attack in organisational terms.

The most important organisation to emerge in this period to play the central role in the mobilisation of our people from a legal plane was the United Democratic Front. Today the UDF is effectively silenced. But the role it has played has ensured that the masses of our people are as militant as ever. This the masses ably demonstrated with the biggest ever stay-away in South African history in June 1988. And in this, also, the UDF played a major role, organised in new, semi-legal and illegal forms. The UDF has certainly taken a bashing, but the organisational base still exists to regroup, revitalise, and, through varied legal and illegal forms, make giant strides in mobilising further our people for militant action against the apartheid state.

The birth of this process is a difficult one. It is not easy to make a transition from one form to another. But this is a flexibility revolutionaries must have, and this is a culture they must develop and inculcate in themselves.

The ANC has an integral role to play in this process as leader of the revolution and custodian of the underground movement. Although we suffer disadvantage from an assault on the legal front, the ANC underground should be the major beneficiary of the attack on the legal mass movement in

organisational terms. The cream of the legal mass movement who are prevented from operating openly by the repression should be drawn into the organised underground. In this way, the underground organisation also revitalises itself with the calibre of activists with fresh experience and intimate links with the masses, links which have to be maintained and strengthened from underground.

In dealing with an enemy as ruthless and repressive as ours, therefore, we should realise that while avenues for open, mass mobilisation should be pursued and undertaken, these should rest firmly on the rock of the ANC underground and be built from it. Le Duan captured this essential relation in these words:

While always taking illegal action as the foundation, the Party skilfully combines it with all possibilities for legal action. In a given situation, it may start an all-out drive for legality, not in order to deceive itself with any illusions about the 'legal' road to power, or to engender such illustrations among the masses, but with a view of giving a broader compass to the education and mustering of the masses and amplifying the influence of the revolution.

The main form then, is that of the underground or "illegal" organisation. Although in a structural sense this form is illegal, in practice it is the chief organiser of all forms of action to raise the fighting spirit of the people, including legal ones.

Render South Africa Ungovernable

The call of our time is for the masses to render South Africa ungovernable. This is a revolutionary call for militant affirmative action. It is a call designed to spur the masses and release their energy for decisive battles against the racist regime. In the process of their magnificent response to this call, we have dared to put on our immediate agenda the central issue of power with our further call: "From Ungovernability to People's Power". If these are not to be taken as idle action slogans, they have to be understood fully for what they mean and for what they can unleash. The ultimate expression of people's militancy is mass insurrection. A programme and slogans, by working and calling for the widest and deepest forms of militancy willy-nilly also advocate insurrection.

But general insurrection is a culmination of many militant campaigns of the masses in which they are schooled and seasoned for the decisive rout of the enemy that an insurrection should become.

What is general mass insurrection? It is a brief, locked, violent social upheaval in which the contending forces compete, now by force, now by guile, for strategic terrain from which to advance their tactical positions for the final rout.

Once insurrection is begun there can be no going back. It must lead to the defeat of one or other of the contending parties. Insurrection is therefore no child's play.

Unlike war or guerilla warfare, mass insurrection as a form is not arrived at by a decision, even though it may be a natural consequence of a revolutionary programme. It is a spontaneous event. But it is also a political action. It is the highest form of revolutionary politics, involving as it does the entire revolutionary masses. It is the most intense, fervent, rapturous and cataclysmic expression of political will by the masses. The masses are swept in a political frenzy, and instead of a long drawn-out conscious political or armed campaign, embark spontaneously on a death-defying struggle for immediate radical change, using all means at their disposal to realise this. It is therefore not a decision. It can neither be conjured nor willed. It occurs because a situation develops which makes it impossible for the masses to bear with their existence any longer. When the rapture takes place, it will not be because the masses have deliberated on it and taken a decision. It will be because "the time has come".

A Spark Can Start a Veld Fire

But insurrection, in order to take place, relies on a stimulus. The objective conditions can be present, but this is no guarantee that an uprising will take place. The sufferings, frustrations and grievances are pent-up until a stimulus arises. The stimulus or "spark" can come in many forms. It can arise out of some high-handed action by some official, sparking protests which spread; the killing of a child, a massacre, unpopular legislation, rent evictions etc. It can even arise out of the most unexpected circumstances like a train accident. The uprising in Burma in 1988 started with a tea-room brawl. Hence the famous saying by Mao Tse Tung: "It is only the tiny spark that sets the prairie afire". The stimulus can also come from the revolutionary movement making a call the response to which triggers

a chain of events leading to insurrection or a direct call to the masses to rise.

But insurrection is not the activity of the masses alone relying on some stimulus to unleash them onto the attack. The masses have to be conscious of the reasons for their plight and conscious of their united organised strength. And this politicisation or conscientisation can only come from “without”, from their best representatives, their vanguard organisations. The masses have to be made aware of their ability and responsibility to change things through their united organised strength. They should be made aware of the need to carry out relentless campaigns to bring about change. In this way, they produce their own leaders and increase confidence in their ability to run their own lives. The contradictions within society have to be explained and the general way forward outlined.

But this is general political education, propaganda and agitation to mobilise the masses for mass political action. What type of education is necessary in insurrectionary politics? In other words, since insurrection is their own spontaneous activity, is it possible to teach the masses about insurrection? To an extent, yes. Firstly, general political education helps them to be better organised in the event of an uprising. It is a desirable prerequisite for successful insurrection. It is the necessary school for the higher struggles. The masses begin to understand the enemy, his strengths and his weaknesses. More, they begin to understand their own strength. The experience they receive steels them for harder battles.

Secondly, the insurrection could otherwise turn out to be a blind fury, dissipating their strength and ending in failure. During the insurrection proper, the vanguard movement (which will not have planned the insurrection) should be in the midst of the masses and at the head of the insurrection, mapping out the broad strategic outlines. It must show the direction of the main blows. It must direct the masses what to attack and when.

Since insurrection is about the seizure of power, and since those who hold the state power do all in their power to deny the revolution any advance, only an astute leadership fighting alongside the masses is able to direct the masses so that they make tactical and strategic gains from day to day. The fluidity of the situation resulting from the reaction trying to regain the tactical and strategic initiative demands that the enemy be continually weakened morally, politically, economically and militarily. Only the artful appraisal of this ensures that the masses make constant advances and the enemy is thrown to the retreat on all fronts.

To this end, crippling economic boycotts and strikes to paralyse the economic infrastructure; blockages and barricades of important road, rail and air traffic arteries; forceable liberation of political prisoners; seizure of key communications or proliferation of own; disarming of vacillating troops, etc are some of the activities the masses must undertake with vigour. The vanguard movement should also carry out the widest possible political propaganda and agitation among the enemy armed forces, because these are critical in determining the outcome of the insurrection.

No Peaceful Roads

There are several reasons why South African revolutionaries in particular should interest themselves in insurrectionary politics, why they should seriously think about insurrection and prepare themselves for one.

The first is that insurrection will take place anyway, whether or not they are prepared or interested. The trend of periodic cycles of revolts exists. The seeds are there. The restlessness is there. The masses have no peaceful avenues of struggle left. Their oppression intensifies and their pain increases. Their well-being and suffering worsens daily with galloping unemployment and a downward economy that hits them most. There is no change in sight. Apartheid entrenches itself at every turn and seeks to impose a forceable submission on our people through violence and terror. But they have always shown the knack to come back and rise to the occasion. The general calm which now prevails is only a precursor to more consummate an uprising.

Secondly, South Africa is a highly industrialised country with a highly organised and conscious working class. The masses of the people are steeped in a rich tradition of resistance to oppression through their organised vanguard movements led by the ANC. This continuous process of struggle and politicisation has ensured that the masses of the people are highly conscious of their oppression and have continually sought ways to fight this oppression. The masses, led by their mass democratic movements, have tried to use all legitimate avenues to fight against apartheid racism and their deprivation.

The South African masses are second to none in their experience of mass political action. That is why a litany of draconian security laws have been enacted to thwart their political action. This notwithstanding, they still find ways to advance their struggle, to broaden their unity and to act decisively. This vast experience will be an advantage for the revolutionary masses when insurrection breaks out.

The third reason is to be found in the intransigence of the apartheid regime. Despite worldwide revulsion and condemnation of its racist policies, despite the most stubborn resistance by the masses of our people, the minority regime obstinately holds on to power. To this end, it employs the most savage repression. It bans the organisations of the masses; it carries out mass arrests, detentions and bannings; it sends troops to our townships to murder and maim; it sponsors marauding bandits and vigilantes and sends them on a pillaging rampage against our people. And then it cheekily offers bogus and meaningless reforms. Happily they are always roundly rejected with contempt.

The Fight Must Continue

For the masses of our people it therefore becomes clear that they have to find new ways of organising themselves and continuing the fight. It becomes clear that the solution lies in the masses themselves, through their most vigorous and militant action; in finding ways to counter the brutal repression and increasing violence of the enemy with their own revolutionary violence. The masses are pushed to the point where they realise that nothing short of the violent overthrow of the regime will bring about genuine change.

Despite the promises of reforms, the lot of the masses of our people gets worse and is bound further to get worse. The plummeting rand and gold price, the fiscal crisis and the general economic crisis gripping the country are bound to affect more the poorer sections of the South African population — the black people. The effects of the economic morass brought about by apartheid mismanagement will be passed on to the poor black people. We can expect hard times for our people, with rising prices, rising hunger and unemployment, rising homelessness and increased repression.

In such a situation, no one can predict when an explosion will take place and what will take place. And we revolutionaries should be prepared to be part of our people in the great struggles that certainly must take place, the great struggles that lie just a little ahead, and should not overtake us.

As the enemy's crisis worsens and as he increases his repression, his circle of friends diminishes. Pressure is increasing and must be stepped up on those ruling circles (particularly in the U.S. and Great Britain) to abandon support for the racists and support the just struggle of the people of South Africa. South Africans have not only a right but also a duty to humanity to use any means to blot out this ugly blemish of apartheid from the face of the earth, just as mankind used violence to defeat Nazism.

In many revolutions, no matter what forms of armed campaign were the main, insurrection played a central role in the unfolding of the armed struggle. In the Vietnamese revolution, for instance, we saw the widest combination of armed forms against the United States and its South Vietnamese clients, from conventional warfare, guerilla warfare, people's war, to armed and unarmed insurrection. Revolutionaries who wage wars of attrition against unpopular regimes should always bear in mind that one of the likely consequences of their activity could be to light up the fuse of mass anger. Those, therefore, who dabble in armed struggle while they caution against mass insurrection do not know what they are doing.

We should therefore also set our sights on armed uprising by the masses, ensuring as well that the armed struggle we have determined to prosecute is embraced by them and that they increasingly take part in it to sharpen their revolutionary tools of struggle so that the final battle finds them better equipped to face the reaction.



COSATU A Leading Force in the Liberation of South Africa

by Ray Alexander

The phenomenal development of the trade union movement in South Africa in the recent period has been one of the main elements responsible for the advance of the Mass Democratic Movement on a countrywide scale.

A KEY FACTOR IN THIS DEVELOPMENT has been the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), formed in November 1985 and today the spokesperson of close on 1 million trade union members. In the discussions which took place between COSATU and SACTU in March 1986, it was agreed

“that the widest possible unity of trade unions in our country is of the utmost importance of our people’s struggle against the apartheid regime and the bosses”.

At its third national congress held in Johannesburg on July 12-16, 1989, proceedings were based on the theme **“EDUCATE, CONSOLIDATE, ADVANCE TO VICTORY!”**

The congress was attended by 1,875 delegates from COSATU’s 16 affiliated unions. Fraternal delegates attended the congress as observers from the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), independent trade

unions, the United Democratic Front (UDF) affiliates, religious and women's organisations, sports groups and teachers' associations.

It was one of the biggest anti-apartheid rallies staged under the four-year state of emergency during which most anti-apartheid groups have been prevented from holding mass meetings. COSATU, as the most significant forum, debated the burning issues of the day.

The importance of the congress does not lie only in size but mainly in the content of the serious issues debated. The challenge was put to the delegates by COSATU President Elijah Barayi in his opening address. He said:

"Given our contention that the regime is itself illegal and illegitimate, we in this Congress are not prepared to confine our programme to what Pretoria has defined as legal and acceptable.¹

"The terrain of our immediate struggle is to map out the path to power and to develop subjective forces that are equal to the task.

"We have the historic task of helping South Africa to move out of the impasse into which the ruling circles have driven it... The vision we are articulating is of a society which will in reality put power into the hands of the people".²

It was in this light that Barayi called for discussion of the ANC's Constitutional Guidelines.

Talk about the Path to Power is not idle. Jay Naidoo, COSATU's general secretary, said:

"We are meeting at a momentous time in our history, on the threshold of transition to a society free from the shackles of economic and political enslavement".

COSATU, he stressed, was the "centre of organised and militant workers, a leading force in the liberation of our country".³

Membership Doubled

Since its formation in 1985 COSATU has more than doubled its membership, from 450,000 to 921,497 paid-up members. Following the principle of "one union for one industry", COSATU has reduced the number of affiliated unions from 33 to 16. Above all COSATU has placed working class politics on the agenda, with militant campaigns such as the Living Wage Campaign.

COSATU has also consolidated at local level, set up shop steward councils in at least 45 areas, established industrial areas committees which played an important role in mobilising participation in the June 1988 National Stayaway.

COSATU's growth in membership flows from the workers' understanding "that it pays to belong to trade unions, it pays to belong to COSATU. Wage

increases for workers obtained by the unions in the first half of this year showed an average of 22%. But companies' profits increased by an average of 54%.⁴ The majority of semi- and unskilled workers believe unions try to help employees to get a fair deal and regard them as guardians of job security⁵

Jay Naidoo said:

"Not only has the Federation grown in terms of members, but also in its political maturity and reminded delegates of COSATU's Second National Congress which adopted the Freedom Charter which deepened the debates and struggles around the role of the working class in fighting for socialism and democracy in South Africa.

"The struggle against national oppression and the struggle against exploitation are complimentary to each other and part of an uninterrupted struggle for total liberation."⁶

Since 1987, the debates on the Freedom Charter have welded unity between COSATU's affiliates and structures and a more serious commitment to build the Central Executive Committee. COSATU and its affiliates organise the people at different levels. They are constantly engaged in struggle for higher wages, and against race discrimination at work. Together with community organisations they participated in the struggle for homes, schools, hospitals, against poor living conditions, increased rents, vigilante violence, the killings in Natal.

COSATU's third national congress examined and debated the campaign against the Labour Relations Amendment Act (LRAA), the ANC's Constitutional Guidelines, the fraudulent tricameral elections, F.W. de Klerk's five year plan, the UDF/COSATU peace initiative in Natal, the woman's position and the struggle for independent Namibia.

The last four years of emergency rule have seen a growing ideological coherence and unity in action between COSATU, the affiliates of UDF and other mass formations. COSATU plays an important role in ensuring unity in action among unions of various political persuasions and thus is able to bring about more massive action on issues such as the Labour Relations Amendment Act.

Jay Naidoo made a passionate call to intensify mass defiance of apartheid:

"We must spread the spirit of defiance to every corner of our land — the factories, shops and mines, into the rural areas and bantustans, into schools and townships."⁴

Sexual Harassment

The Transpost and General Workers' Union (TGWU) in a resolution drew attention to the fact that there were many instances of sexual harassment in the trade union movement and called for tighter sexual discipline which

should form part of a proposed code of conduct. The TGWU said "male unionists used their political experience and organisational seniority to win over new women recruits and when such unequal relationships collapsed, the women often dropped out of the organisations and splits occurred." After a heated debate, a watered down resolution was adopted, calling for discussion of a code and the possible incorporation into it of the question of sexual conduct.

In the past, when organising women workers and particularly in the Food and Canning Workers' Union (FCWU), we conducted an ongoing campaign and struggle against sexual harassment in the factories. Departmental managers and foremen who used their power to hire and fire women workers were exposed. At branch and factory meetings, where issues were discussed openly.

Communists and ANC activists must not shy away from this problem. President O.R. Tambo, in his statement to the conference of the ANC Women's Section in Luanda, in September 1981, said:

"The mobilisation of the people into active resistance and struggle for liberation demands the energies of women no less than that of men. A system based on the exploitation of man by man can in no way avoid the exploitation of women by male members of society."

Therefore the TGWU's resolution was timely. A further resolution it moved, calling for the promotion of women leadership in COSATU and its affiliates, was adopted despite opposition of some delegates. A resolution by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) to facilitate the revival of the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) was also adopted.⁸

The formation of COSATU's Women's Forum in April 1988 was a positive contribution towards the development of women's leadership in COSATU and its affiliates. Having read the Forum's minutes of workshops and seminars held in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, I am confident that women trade unionists will fight and win greater female leadership in the labour movement and in the process eradicate sexual harassment at all levels.

National Strikes

COSATU's congress outlined a course of national strike action and agreed that workers' action be finally endorsed by the Second Workers' Summit

involving COSATU, NACTU and non-aligned unions. The COSATU congress resolved to recommend to this Summit a week of "co-ordinated and sustained" worker protest to focus on the LRAA, the racist elections and the general state of repression.

The employers' S.A. Consultative Committee of Labour Affairs (SACCOLA) response to the threat of industrial action was to warn that it could jeopardise the ongoing negotiations between the unions and SACCOLA on the restructuring of the Labour Relations Amendment Act.

Shortly after the COSATU congress, the government announced on July 20 that it had asked the National Manpower Commission to investigate the LRAA and particularly its contentious Section 79(2) which broadens unions' liabilities for damages in illegal strikes.

The unions announced that between July 24 and August 15 their members would be balloted and national protest action could follow.

COSATU's determination to implement a sustained programme of action is based not on sloganising, but on the growing strength of its affiliates and their involvement in various campaigns such as this consumer rent and bus boycotts.

In Carletonville, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the Khutsong Action Committee (KAC) comprising 27 community organisations, called for a consumer boycott of white-owned shops, defiance actions such as sit-ins in parks and other amenities, the local Chamber of Commerce admitted that the boycott caused a loss of over R12 million.⁹

The sixth national congress of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) held on April 12-16, 1989 and attended by 601 delegates from 16 regions with the theme Defend and Consolidate NUM.

Harry Gwala, recently released from a sentence of life imprisonment, delivered the Honorary President's address on behalf of Nelson Mandela. The conference debated 80 resolutions as well as the ANC's Constitutional Guidelines. The Congress demanded that all forms of discrimination in the mining industry be abolished. It called for safety measures for miners, the defeat of repression and defiance of apartheid.

The Second National Congress of the National Union of Metalworkers of S.A. (NUMSA) held on May 18-21 in Johannesburg, attended by 750 delegates representing 190,000 members, welcomed Moses Mayekiso, its general secretary, who had been acquitted on charges of treason and sedition. Moses Mayekiso called on the workers to build workers' unity and the mass democratic movement (MDM).¹⁰

COSATU and its affiliates had suffered a number of setbacks at the hands of the regime — the sentencing to death and long sentences for activists of the South African Railways & Harbour Workers' Union (SARHWU), and the Post Office and Telecommunications Workers' (POTWA); the murder of trade unionists like Jabu Ndlovu, a shop steward of NUMSA, and Elias Banda, National Organiser of Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union of S.A. (ACTWUSA); attacks on trade union offices of the Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU), Chemical Workers' Industrial Union (CWIU) in East London, and the destruction of trade union activists' homes.

After the congress, COSATU unions flexed their muscles with a series of strikes in major firms around the country. The MDM, a powerful alignment of patriotic forces of which COSATU is a key component, announced its campaign of mass peaceful defiance of unjust laws.

Regime in Crisis

The MDM's Defiance Campaign is taking place when South Africa is in the grip of an all-embracing crisis. The economy, judiciary, education and other sections of the South African community are in disarray. The overriding factor in all this has been the escalation of violence, the growing influence of the military and security systems, the social, economic and political effects of apartheid.

The Defiance Campaign has been marked by participation from a broad range of South African labour, clergy and academics. The increasing participation of whites has led to the enhancement of non-racial solidarity against apartheid. 771 young whites refused to serve in the South African Defence Force as it upholds apartheid, and declared their solidarity with the MDM in defiance of unjust laws.

COSATU, NACTU and independent unions held the Second Workers' Summit despite police restrictions. Anti-LRAA protests, work stoppages in factories, shops and mines were held nationally. COSATU's call for a stayaway in protest against the LRAA and against apartheid tri-cameral elections was accepted. It was also agreed to organise a consumer boycott and a ban on overtime.

Business and industry throughout the country came to a halt on Tuesday the 6th and Wednesday the 7th September as an estimated three million workers staged a massive stayaway, one of the largest in South Africa's history.

The Associated Chamber of Commerce described the stayaway as "obviously very substantial". In the Eastern Cape the entire workforce

stayed away on both days. More than 60% of the work force in the Western Cape participated in the Stayaway, the biggest ever in that region. An exceptionally high absentee rate in Natal was registered as thousands did not report for work. The Natal Chamber of Industries said there was an almost 100% Stayaway in the textile industry, between 60 and 95% in the milling and rubber industries.¹¹

The Cape Flats townships on election day were not only marked by strike action, but became a battle zone leaving at least 23 people dead and over one hundred injured — men, women and children. Children had been teargassed, shot with rubber bullets, birdshot and buckshot.

On Wednesday September 13, about 40,000 people responded to the MDM's call to protest against police shooting in the city's townships and marched behind banners reading:

"PEACE IN OUR CITY!" "STOP THE KILLINGS!"

"HANDS OFF COSATU!" etc

The march was led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu; the mayor of Cape Town, Mr Gordon Oliver; COSATU General Secretary, Jay Naidoo; Frank Chikane, General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches; UDF President Zollie Malindi, Dr Allan Boesak and others. ANC, SACP and UDF flags were hoisted to loud applause from the marchers. The crowd welcomed the ANC flag draped over the mayor's balcony.

Jay Naidoo declared on behalf of COSATU:

"We will continue to intensify action against the targets already identified, which are hospitals, schools and beaches. Another major focus of the campaign will be our right to speak, organise, meet and protest freely. In this way we will be building the free political climate necessary for any meaningful negotiations to take place. We are determined to smash the Labour Relations Amendment Act through a sustained programme of action which will show employees that we will never accept apartheid laws in general and the LRAA in particular."¹³

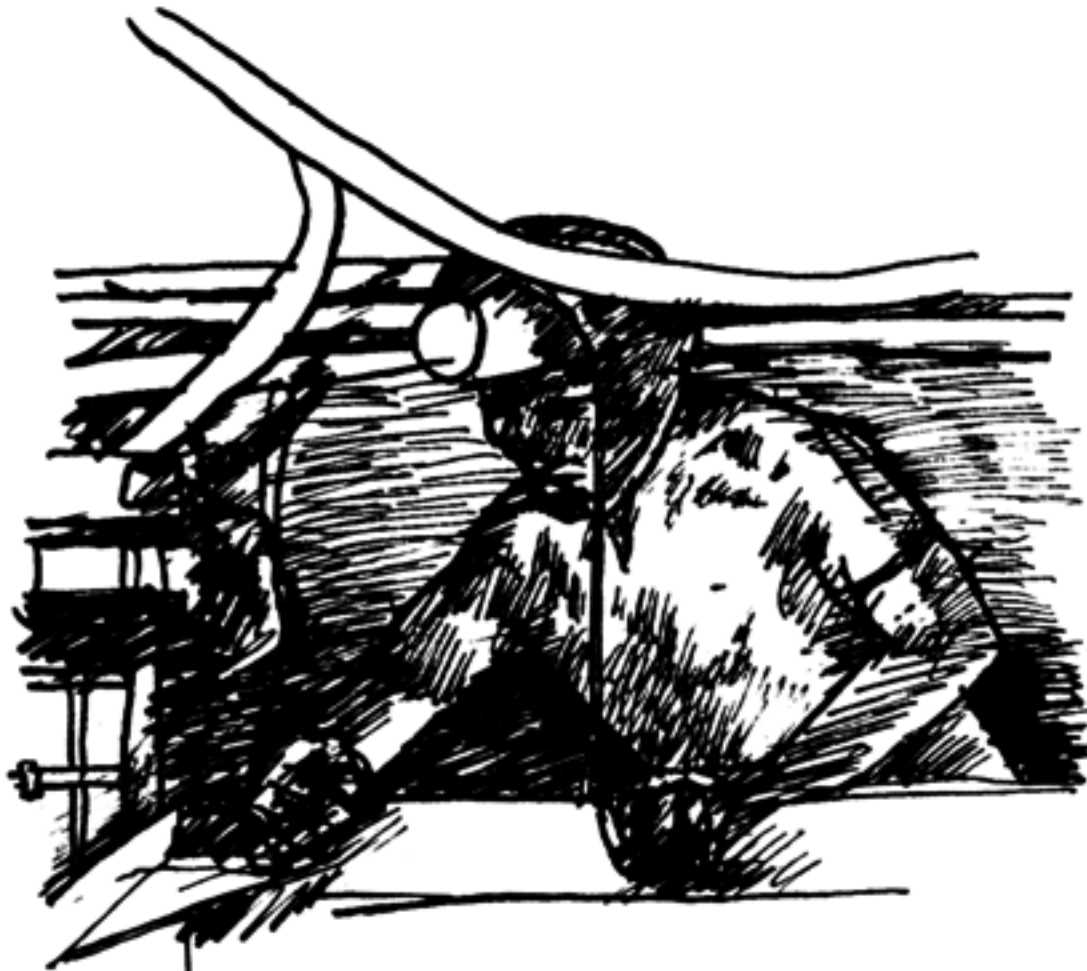
The defiance fever spread. Thousands of people around South Africa took to the streets. We witnessed historic marches in Cape Town, 35,000 in Johannesburg, 40,000 in East London and Durban, 80,000 in Uitenhage, in Bloemfontein, Oudtshoorn, Pretoria, Stellenbosch, Pietermaritzburg. Thousands of residents of the bloodiest township in Natal, Mpumalanga, refusing to be cowed by violence, marched in protest at the killings. Thousands of people from across the social and political spectrum participated in these marches with banners of the ANC, UDF, the South African Communist Party, COSATU, NUM, SAMWU and other union banners and hundreds of posters reading:

“HANDS OFF COSATU!” “PEACE IN OUR TOWNSHIPS!”

COSATU's leadership in strikes, its participation in the Mass Democratic Movement, in the defiance campaign, in the marches in the cities, in towns, and villages, made all the difference to the deep seated political crisis for the apartheid regime and our advance to victory.

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THE WOMAN QUESTION

Are The Chains Breaking?

by Baleka Kgositile

There are many angles from which the question of women's emancipation can be approached. There are also numerous questions being raised on this issue, particularly inside the country, which place a serious challenge to the movement to give guidance on this neglected area. In order to equip us to tackle this task the movement must encourage debate on the questions now being raised sharply. In this brief discussion I will attempt to deal with only two issues.

IT IS TRUE THAT THE WOMAN QUESTION — like many others in the process of struggle — is one around which a lot of confusion and division can be introduced in our ranks. It is in that context that one understands the phobia for “Western feminism” we generally have. But we should not allow ourselves to indefinitely postpone looking at this area objectively because that, in the final analysis, would mean that we are shunning our responsibility as a national liberation movement.

There is the hard fact that the population of South Africa, nationally, includes more than 50% women. We have also repeatedly acknowledged that women, especially the African women, have historically been the most oppressed and exploited on grounds of sex, class and race. For these reasons it is not enough for us to *bear women in mind* during the struggle for national liberation. Rather the onus is on us to make our liberation truly national by making sure that we have not just transferred power from the de Klerks to the "people", but that we have taken steps to ensure that the more than 50% of the population are meaningfully participating in all spheres of the process of social transformation. We must consciously create mechanisms to ensure women's emancipation.

Some Hang-ups

Many men and women have hang-ups about women's emancipation. One often hears comments like:

"Women in the movement don't need to worry."

"We'll see about those things when we have our country back."

"No, those things are confusions that are a luxury of white women."

"Our culture and traditions this that and the next."

These are an easy way out. People who use these arguments are either genuinely ignorant of the reality around them or they don't want to accept it and deal with it. The latter is usually the case. Men are so comfortable with being waited on that many are not particularly keen to discuss women's emancipation even if they are supposed to be revolutionaries. Women, on the other hand, are so used to "catering" for others that they tend to hold on to roles that retard their political development.

The Tactical/Organisational Issue

Is it necessary to single out women as a social category when you're dealing with writing, education, culture or any other area of social production? Is it necessary to organise women students as women on campuses before involving them in South African National Students' Congress broad politics? Is it necessary to have a Women's Section?

Historically women have been marginalised in most areas of life. If we accept that our historic mission demands that we redress this situation, then we will understand that the answer to the questions above is an unequivocal YES.

For instance, education does not differentiate on grounds of sex. Except for subjects like domestic science and woodwork, textbooks for both boys

and girls in most subjects are the same. So are the teachers. However, if you don't look at women separately in an education workshop you are likely to miss a number of things that would influence your policies and future programmes. You would miss an opportunity to look at how many girls/women are doing certain subjects as opposed to boys/men; the implications of the school system channelling girls towards domestic science and boys to woodwork; the age levels at which girls come into and leave the formal education arena; whether or not it is necessary/feasible in a given situation to design special education programmes to suit and cater for the needs of women with young children. These are some of the cultural and socio-political factors at play.

It is necessary in this regard to commend the Congress of South African Writers for having a conference on "Women and Writing". This has given us a chance to observe that there are fewer women writers than men writers. We've been able to look — under a sub-section of *Images of Women in Literature* — at how capitalism vulgarises women in the images projected to advertise a whole range of cosmetic commodities and other things. We had an opportunity to admit that "women.... don't have a culture of reading. We are hampered by housework, by childcare... by jobs outside the home. We have very little time to read."

The question of literacy programmes came up. A young woman writer challenged: "How many of us take the trouble to write in African languages for the sake of effective communication?" I am saying that this was a special occasion to look at the specific experience of women within this area of social activity. What we do, and our future plans, should be guided by what we've learnt from this exercise. This does not do away with the fact that male and female writers continue to write on whatever themes of their choice according to individual inclination and capability.

Organising Women As Women

The mobilisation and organisation of women into democratic formations has posed challenges as in the case of SANSCO on university campuses and colleges. Without insisting that it is always absolutely necessary for a woman student to first become a member of a women's group, I think there are advantages in organising women as women.

First we have to acknowledge that we're from various backgrounds with varying levels of political consciousness. There are those who'll more readily join in and be very constructive in a discussion, and be ready to take action, on the rape and pregnancy question of a fellow student. These are issues that

affect women and do require that the victims be assisted and supported emotionally and in other ways by fellow women. Only when we attend to women's real problems will we gain their confidence. After all rape is an old problem that has been growing with the further rotting of our sick society.

Even if there aren't many issues affecting women students in their hostels separately and differently from their male colleagues, the very fact that they are physically situated together, as women, in the women's hostel, should facilitate dialogue. Discussions could be run on women's experiences in other parts of the world, for example, in Nicaragua, Cuba, Asia, other parts of Africa. This could be the beginning of a process of confidence building and conscientising women, some of whom could develop to be activists at all other levels of our struggle.

It is important for young women at colleges and university campuses to maintain contact with the communities they come from, and are going back to, through structural relations with community organisations and women's organisations in particular. In this way they would be in a better position to relate their academic training to the needs of the people and be better able to resist temptations to be co-opted by the system. They would also be in a better position to be up-to-date on the issues and preoccupations of our women outside the academic world. Most importantly, they should ensure their own relevance to, and direct contribution towards, changing the lot of thousands of men, women and children after graduating from institutions of higher learning.

One cannot deny the real danger of ghettoising the women's question that has been raised. Traditional tendencies, like monopolising areas like child care, can quietly thrive in the Women's Ghetto. The flipside of this is that we continue not to allow men to participate in the areas that are traditionally 'women's jobs'. There must be a politically motivated effort to strike a balance between the fact that women must take the lead in their own emancipation, and that the task is for both men and women.

Because women are the most sensitised to the issues affecting them every day, they are better placed for the role of identifying priorities and emphasis for a programme to redress centuries of deprivation and subjugation. But everybody must participate in the efforts to develop women — by men sharing in some of the work that women have always done alone, also by their imparting skills and knowledge, not in a condescending manner but in a mature comradely way. Women must not be dismissed impatiently because they are shy or lack confidence. Let us understand the significance of shyness in its proper historical perspective and help our women.

If we get over the stage where our perception of the woman question is always blurred by the spectre of 'Western feminism' then we should get on with the business of addressing this crucial question as expected and demanded of us by history.

Working-class Women

It is among African working-class women that the most volatile situation exists for real advances towards women's emancipation. It is there that we have seen some of the most shocking evidence of human exploitation and oppression.

In December 1988 Mrs Elizabeth Motaung was suddenly told she was too old to continue working for a white family she had served for 40 years in Brakpan. She worked from Monday to Saturday for R30 all these years. She had a room and was given food. The only leave she got was when the white family went away on annual leave. Even then she was forced to stay and look after their house.

She obviously didn't spend much time with her own family. She could not have been able to save any money over the years. The white woman for whom she had worked all those years must be absolutely insensitive — typical of an apartheid robot — to the needs of this woman, a member of her own sex. The 'maids and madams' syndrome in our society is a sickness which we must stamp out.

It was rather disheartening to learn from some of the FIVE FREEDOMS FORUM delegates that even white women in the Mass Democratic Movement are still showing signs of total insensitivity when it comes to dealing with the black women who work for them. When they have meetings round the clock, throughout the weekend, they simply *tell* the servant they're busy and they go. No discussion on the implications of this to the black woman, her family in the township, and so forth. These are things we must bring out into the open as we march to a future South Africa, so that we deal effectively with them and clear the air.

Women's solidarity across colour lines is important. Not only does it facilitate the thawing of racial tensions but it has proved very effective where women have been victims of sexism. In 1983 a Unilever manager had to be transferred after a one-day stoppage of the black workforce which demanded that he be fired for sexually harassing a white woman employee. Then there was the Port Alfred case in 1986. The police had failed to charge a man who had raped and stabbed an elderly woman. In addition to a one-week strike by domestic workers, they drew their white women employers

into the scene. Not only was the rapist arrested and tried, but the women saw to it he was expelled from their township. Through the Port Alfred Women's Organisation, communication lines were opened between black and white women over an issue of mutual interest.

Significant Developments

To illustrate the possibilities for women's advancement hereunder we tabulate some developments within the past 10 years.

a). The systematic implementation, by the regime, of industrial decentralisation after 1982 led to the swelling of numbers of Africans coming into the labour force. There has already been a steady increase of women of all races, the majority being African, between 1960 and 1980.

b). The growth of the trade union movement has facilitated the unionisation of domestic workers, so that today we have the South African Domestic Workers Union (SADWU) which was launched in November, 1986. This was one of the greatest achievements in our history, especially given the legal, political and practical hurdles that had to be confronted and tackled.

c). From the early 1980s some unions have been raising issues of particular concern to women workers: the question of equal pay for the same work between men and women workers; the maternity rights with the attendant job security for women. These were some of the first issues raised.

In 1982 the Council of Unions of South Africa resolved to establish a Women's Unit: to redouble efforts to stamp out discrimination in all aspects of employment; to increase the number of childcare services in the community; and to encourage women's full participation in unions and politics.

d). The Wiehahn Commission recommended abolition of sex discrimination in pay, leading to the 1981 Labour Relations and Wages Acts. These did not have much effect in regard to the improvement of women's salaries as these women still do the lowest-paid, unskilled 'women's jobs'.

e). The resolve to deal with the question of women's oppression and exploitation has been more firmly imprinted on the agenda of the struggle for working-class rights than in any other political formation, even in women's organisations in South Africa.

g). There is definite evidence of the linking of shop-floor life with the home experience and the most mature and open debates on women's lives, with some men even recognising the divisiveness of women's inequalities for the working-class as a whole.

h). Women have been benefitting from literacy programmes servicing trade unions, e.g. the English Literacy Project (ELP) linked to the Food and Allied Workers' Union and Transport and General Workers' Union.

COSATU

The November 1985 launch of South Africa's major trade union Federation put the woman question high on its agenda. "COSATU believes that women should take first place in our struggle..." It stated that it was "against all unequal and discriminatory treatment of women *at work, in society, and in the federation.*" It committed itself to fight not only for maternity rights but for *paternity leave* as well. *Sexual harassment in whatever form* was singled out. These are but a few of the 'sensitive' issues that COSATU had the courage to write into its constitution from the outset.

COSATU went further to commit itself to setting up a sub-committee to ensure follow-up on these resolutions and to promote better understanding of the specific discrimination suffered by women workers. It committed itself to a *budget* for this committee.

The COSATU Education Conference resulted in the National Women's Conference of 22-24 April, 1988. This saw the launch of the COSATU Women's Forum. Unfortunately there is no report of the Forum's activities. The report of the Third COSATU Congress is very brief on women, who feature under Education.

Newspaper (*Weekly Mail* July 21-27, 1989) reports of the debate on women indicate that there was some controversy on the issue of sexual harassment. What is positive is that this question is raised at all and that sexual conduct will probably be incorporated into the Code of Conduct still to be adopted.

A positive development coming out in the report of this year's COSATU congress is that affiliates are paying more attention to 'women's issues' in national negotiations they undertake.

The Chemical Workers' Industrial Union (CWIU), which has a 12% female membership, has made much progress on maternity rights by completing agreements at 79 plants. The terms range from three months to twelve months' leave with job guarantees. Some of the plants pay for part of the time, the best being 6.5 months of full pay.

A new focus that was raised at the 1988 conference is the killer cervical cancer. CWIU and NUMSA have taken this up, getting employers to organise regular clinics at the factories. Pap smears are performed for all women workers to avoid the cancer creeping up on unsuspecting women as

has happened to hundreds of women who have died in the past. South Africa has been said to have the highest incidence of cervical cancer in the world, most victims being black women.

The TGWU resolution on Women's Leadership, "to attempt to break down all practical barriers to the full participation of women leadership in our structures, by providing child care facilities at all meetings where it is needed, by assisting to transport women comrades home when meetings end late and where it is dangerous for them to take public transport and by spreading the idea that housework should be shared between men and women" is an indication that it's not smooth sailing. But issues *are raised* and concrete proposals made. The hostility sometimes expressed by some male workers is not to be unexpected. What is significant is that they exercise their minds on these things at all.

There is overwhelming evidence that it is the black working-class women who have sharply tackled, in a disciplined context, issues that affect the majority of South African women. This is not to say that issues affecting women of other classes and races are not important. Rather this is to underline the urgency and importance of addressing the plight of those who are at the bottom of the pile.



“The Socialist Path is the Only One Open to the Oppressed Everywhere”

An Interview with Harry Gwala

(Harry Gwala, trade unionist and political leader, was sentenced in 1976 to life imprisonment for furthering the aims of a banned organisation and recruiting for Umkhonto we Sizwe. He was released from prison on November 26, 1988, with a motor neurone disability acquired while he was in jail.)

The African Communist: Harry, perhaps you can tell us what brought you to politics in the first instance.

Harry Gwala: In my first year as a teacher I found that many children coming from the slums could hardly concentrate and were dozing whilst the class was going on. It was only when I visited some of the families that I discovered how intolerable their living standards were. In class we were teaching them about hygiene, diet, sanitation and cleanliness and all those things, but the condition of their parents put all those things beyond their reach.

It was about this time that I started reading the *Guardian* newspaper which I came across in the corner shop, and putting one thing and another together I began thinking it was not enough teaching the children about hygiene. One had to do something about low wages and the condition of their parents.

AC: You joined the Communist Party before you joined the ANC, is that right?

HG: Yes, I joined the Communist Party in 1942 and the ANC in 1944.

AC: How do you explain that?

HG: In those days the ANC in Natal was more or less dead. The people who were very active were the Communist Party. They were holding mass meetings and organising trade unions, and of course they were organising political classes. I had my first political education in the Communist Party, which taught me about the national question.

Up till then I had thought in terms of black and white, racial discrimination and the colour bar. It was only when I joined the Communist Party that I realised the whole thing revolved around the class struggle.

AC: What is the relation between the national question and the class struggle?

HG: South Africa is a classic example of the way in which the national struggle and class struggle are banded together. Let us take the question of the African workers. Under the Urban Areas Act which was promulgated in 1923 they were driven out of towns and herded into township ghettos which no one could enter but themselves. Even their own families had no right to be there, because when they reached the age of 16 they had to get permission to live with their parents; and their parents were only tolerated as long as they provided labour for industry and commerce. They were mostly unskilled and their wages were very low.

AC: As a teacher did you have to carry a pass?

HG: Yes, everyone carried a pass, every day, all day.

AC: And were you stopped by the police and asked to produce your pass?

HG: Often. It happened to every African, teacher or no teacher. It was terrible. I suppose the only people who escaped were the priests, because they carried their own badge around their necks.

AC: What made you go in for teaching in the first place?

HG: I grew up in the rural areas and the only occupation of importance was teaching.

AC: Your father was a deacon in the Lutheran church. Didn't you feel like following him into the church?

HG: I never liked the church. My brother and I used to run away from church. The only time we went to church was when we wanted to get some new clothes because if we didn't go to church we wouldn't get new clothes. Once we got our new clothes we kept away from church. There was great rigidity in the church. The priest would torment you with threats that you

would roast in hell if you sinned. Our minds were really tortured. No one wanted to be roasted.

AC: Was this your father who tortured you or some other priest?

HG: All of them. We used to have to say prayers when we went to bed, we had to pray, but our father was a rich peasant who had cattle and lots of land and he used to hire casual labourers. He used to slave us. My mother was an ordinary woman from traditional parents. She was barely literate.

AC: Could she read to you?

HG: No, no.

AC: As a boy did you have to go into the country looking after the cattle?

HG: That was a ritual. Every African boy had to go into the country to look after the cattle.

AC: Did you have electric light in your home and running water?

HG: Oh no! Even now there is no electric light or running water in the countryside, though the white farmer might have them.

AC: So could you read at night?

HG: Yes, we used lamps, not candles. It wasn't easy. You read lying on your stomach or on your side. Life was hard but we thought it was good because we knew no better.

AC: How far did you go at school?

HG: I went as far as Junior Certificate at school and then went for teacher training.

AC: Were your classes held in English?

HG: Yes of course. Zulu was taught as a subject but everything had to be taught in English. History, science and maths were my favourite subjects.

AC: Did they teach you the history of the Zulu people?

HG: No, they taught us the history of South Africa, the white history of South Africa.

AC: And the Battle of Blood River and all that stuff?

HG: Yes, all the battles. Everything was taught from the white point of view. The Africans were always wrong.

AC: Were all your teachers white?

HG: Even our African teachers taught the masters' history as if they were the masters themselves.

AC: And when did you learn the real history of South Africa?

HG: Only when I joined the Communist Party and learned something about the history of South Africa and Europe. Then I began to realise that what we had been taught at school was more indoctrination than history.

AC: Did that come as a shock?

HG: It came as a real shock because the history we are taught finally becomes your own oppressor, the master becomes the master and you remain the subject. You can do nothing right. The master is always right.

Into Trade Unions

AC: After joining the Communist Party you decided to give up teaching and go into trade unionism?

HG: Yes. Another teacher James Hadebe, who was also a member of the Communist Party, and I used to go out after school and visit factories and address the workers on trade unions. Finally I was asked to leave teaching and take up trade union work.

AC: Who asked you?

HG: The Party asked me.

AC: Was anyone else organising trade unions at that time?

HG: Not that I know of, only the Party. There were the old trade unions like the Building Workers' Union, the Typographical Workers' Union, the Amalgamated Engineering Workers' Union and other unions organised under the S.A. Trades and Labour Council — white unions with no black members.

AC: So all the new unions were largely for black workers?

HG: Yes, for African and Indian workers. There was a very small Coloured community in Pietermaritzburg.

AC: And it was only the Communist Party that was organising these workers?

HG: Yes, it was only the Party that was organising these workers.

AC: What was the ANC doing at that time?

HG: There was no ANC. And even when the ANC was revived in the middle of 1944 it wasn't interested in the trade unions.

AC: But that was the year in which you joined the ANC. Why did you join the ANC?

HG: I was taught by the Party that an oppressed person had to fight the national struggle as well as the class struggle, and that to fight national oppression you had to be in the ANC and strengthen it.

AC: Did the work of Party members help to revive the ANC?

HG: Yes, quite a lot. Before long the ANC in Pietermaritzburg was strong and active. The leading personnel in the ANC there were Selby Msimang, the provincial secretary, and his brother Oliver. And who was also very helpful was the retired ex-President of the ANC, J.T. Gumede, who was living in Pietermaritzburg at that time. He had a very positive attitude

towards the Party. We used to invite him to address trade union meetings. He used to tell us about his experiences in the Soviet Union and other countries. He was a great admirer of the Soviet Union. Incidentally the ANC didn't invite him when it had meetings.

AC: One of the pupils you taught at school was Moses Mabhida, who said he learned his politics from you and later became general secretary of the Communist Party. Can you tell us something about him?

HG: We were staying in the same area — Slangspruit — but Mabhida was from a very poor family. His father worked at the municipal beerhall as a cleaner. Mabhida had to find money for his own schooling but he was a very brilliant scholar. I was organising the students there into a Youth Club with the aim of giving them political education, and Mabhida was one of the young people who distinguished themselves. He left school in 1942 to work for a co-operative society until he left home to do trade union work, and afterwards work for the Party and the ANC.

AC: Did Mabhida also join the Party before he joined the ANC?

HG: Yes.

AC: At this time the leadership of the Congress was shifting from the conservatives to more radical elements. What kind of impact did this have?

HG: Under the Kajee group the Indian Congress had been as dead as the ANC in Pietermaritzburg. At that time most Party members were in the trade union movement. When the Anti-Segregation Council was organised in the mid-forties we went to the workers so that the Indian Congress could be strengthened. I remember the Chemical Workers' Union had a big Indian membership and later when I organised the Municipal Workers' Union we had them registered on the basis of the Indian membership. We got a lot of co-operation and later the progressive group took over the NIC under the leadership of Monty Naicker.

AC: How did you get on with Dr Naicker?

HG: Perhaps this will explain it. When we were organising for the June 26, 1950 stay-away in protest against the Suppression of Communism Bill, Champion, who was leader of the ANC at the time, chickened out. We in the ANC Youth League then asked Monty Naicker to take over and he led the stay-away of 1950.

AC: When did you join the Youth League?

HG: In fact we organised it in 1948. We felt that the ANC had to be gingered up. The ANC consisted mostly of old people in those days. There were no women. The biggest element was the chiefs. I remember at one ANC conference many of the chiefs were drunk and did not know what was going

on. Even the treasurer was a chief and he also did not know what was happening. There was already a Youth League in the Transvaal and we felt we should organise a Youth League in Natal.

The idea that the ANC Youth League was organised by the intellectuals from Fort Hare university should be corrected. The initiative for the formation of the Youth League came from the Party. We in the Party had the Young Communist League, but we had a problem getting the YCL into the townships. So it was felt that a Youth League should be formed in the ANC and this would provide the basis for recruitment into the YCL. I remember that this issue was discussed when I attended a Party school in Johannesburg in 1943.

AC: How do you explain the fact that the ANC Youth Leaguers in the beginning took quite a strong stand against the Communist Party?

HG: When the ANC Youth League was formed it was felt that the question of leadership had to be left in the hands of the Africans themselves. It was then that the African intellectuals like Lembede and others came in with their ultra-nationalism and anti-communism. But most of them changed later.

The Communist Party

AC: Can you tell us about your feelings on the dissolution of the Communist Party in 1950?

HG: When the Nationalist Government was threatening to ban the Party, the question that exercised the minds of the comrades was whether to go underground, to defy, to lie low, disband and group later. When I attended the Party congress in 1948, there were already signs that some people were taking fright. Some of the "stalwarts" who had been seen in 1944, 1945, 1946 and 1947 were not there, including some members of the Central Committee. The Party does not organise on the permission of the ruling class. If we were banned we should immediately have gone underground. I assumed when the Party was dissolved that this would be followed by regrouping and reorganisation.

AC: In your time you have been a member of the ANC, the SACP, active in the trade unions. How would you describe yourself?

HG: I have always felt that the class struggle is the key question in the modern class-divided society and that the only organisation that truly reflects the aspirations of the people and that would lead the people to emancipation is the Communist Party. When it comes to the trade unions, they have limitations. They are the product of the bourgeois system and fight for limited objectives, conditions of employment and so on. As for the

national question, being the product of the development of society itself, it is linked with the question of bourgeois democracy. Democracy in bourgeois society means that everyone has the vote, but you can have a black prime minister, a black president and black cabinet ministers and still have people going hungry and homeless. The only people who have the answers to these problems are those armed with the most advanced theory of our times, Marxism-Leninism, and that is our Communist Party.

AC: So in your view, we won't get the ideal democracy in South Africa until we have achieved socialism.

HG: I wouldn't put it that way because our ideas of democracy are relative. I have been watching the people who are running away from the German Democratic Republic saying they want democracy and freedom. But in the past we have seen some of these "refugees" come to South Africa and they turn out to be fascists who support the apartheid regime. And what do Margaret Thatcher and George Bush know about democracy? Their CIA organises to overthrow and assassinate the leaders and democratically elected representatives in other countries, they support Savimbi in Angola or the Mujahaddin in Afghanistan. The Communist Party fights for a democracy of a completely new type which will finally be based on a classless society.

Socialism and Internationalism

AC: What do you feel about *perestroika* and *glasnost*?

HG: In so far as they are concerned with improving socialism, with improving the well-being of the people I am in favour. But there are some features which I don't like. I tend to agree with Brezhnev on internationalism. If someone attacks one of us, he attacks us all. We have to defend one another, and I don't see why the imperialists should be given so much latitude to pick us off one by one. Those who say they want private enterprise in the socialist countries are not concerned with democracy. The basic question is: who controls the means of production? Must they return to private ownership or remain in the hands of the people? Secondly, I feel those who defend socialism should be given their due. People like Stalin must be given their place. You can criticise him for the mistakes he made but you must respect his achievements.

AC: You spoke earlier about Gumede and his visit to the Soviet Union. Can you tell us something about what the Soviet Union meant to you in your political life?

HG: In South Africa there is both abject poverty and extreme wealth. When

we read history we find that similar conditions prevailed in Tsarist Russia and they had to change those conditions to bring about a new society. The Soviet Union has been a living example of socialism to us, a beacon to our working class.

AC: Are you optimistic about the present situation in the trade union movement in South Africa?

HG: I am very optimistic, but with reservations. I'm optimistic because we have never had such a massive trade union organisation in South Africa as we have now, with the biggest federation COSATU in the whole history of the movement. And the workers want to move on to a new society, to socialism. Party literature is widely distributed and well-received in the trade unions. Whenever you have a demonstration or a funeral you see the Party flag.

On the other hand, I think we must take account of the divisions in the trade union world, between the World Federation of Trade Unions and the ICFTU. Many of the trade unions at home, while not being affiliated directly to the ICFTU, are affiliated to the international secretariats which are affiliates of this body. This causes a certain amount of perturbation, because these people are pouring money into the trade unions at home and also into the mass democratic movement. Unless we expose this commercialism we might find ourselves working with the forces of imperialism.

AC: What do you feel about the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU)?

HG: We must try to win over the trade unions in NACTU and we must try to get the NACTU leadership to work with COSATU. Of course there are some mischievous elements within NACTU. There are those who want to project the image of exclusivity, that is in the first place an Africanist image, and secondly a black consciousness image. And there are elements who come with Trotskyist ideas, the so-called workerists. But I think these elements are not having a field day as they did initially.

Black Consciousness

AC: Throughout your career you must have had to deal with this problem of Africanism, pan-Africanism, black consciousness, whatever you call this sort of exclusiveness tendency amongst certain of the black groups in South Africa. What is the answer to these groups?

HG: Well, first of all Africanism, this "blackism" if you may call it that, did not originate with the black consciousness movement. It started as early as the last century when those priests broke away to form what they called the "black house" and the beginning of political consciousness amongst the

oppressed in South Africa. You can only understand this if you understand the colonial conditions that existed in South Africa. The white people were the colonial settlers, the ones who were running the administrative organs of the country. The oppressed were excluded from this on the grounds of colour and race. Black consciousness had its positive role at one time, but for us it is not a question of replacing one bourgeoisie with another, but replacing the oppressive social system with a better one. It is not a question of blacks getting into the shoes of Oppenheimer and Gavin Relly. The black consciousness people today use the ideas of socialism and the working class as a smokescreen because in fact they are fighting against the very socialism of the working class.

AC: What do you say to those who today argue that it is not only the socialist countries that are in crisis, but the very theory of Marxism-Leninism that is in crisis?

HG: I am not aware that Marxism-Leninism is in crisis. When there is a crisis, I always look up my Marxism-Leninism to solve the crisis that faces us. In the socialist countries our people sometimes had an idealistic approach to socialism. Socialism gets stronger by ridding itself of waste material and that is what is happening in the socialist countries today. You have to advance. You can't rest on your laurels and remain in inertia. You have to keep revolutionising your own bureaucratic organs. The fight for survival is over and the competition with capitalism is today an ideological one — you must improve the standard of living of the people.

AC: So you don't fear for the future of socialism?

HG: Not at all. I think the imperialists are too ambitious if they think that a country like the Soviet Union will go capitalist. In a country like the GDR you will have to kill every communist if you want to go back to capitalism. I have no fear that socialism will be overthrown by the forces of darkness.

AC: What is it in Marxism-Leninism that you find so enlightening?

HG: Marxism-Leninism is not a bible where you find prayers and you say them to ease your heart and soul. Marxism-Leninism is an inspiration and a guide to action. It is a general theory which makes it possible for struggling people throughout the world to solve their problems. Take the question of ungovernability in South Africa. If you go to the bible it will tell you that suffering and oppression are an act of God. Our ancestors will tell you about spirits. It is only Marxism that enables you to analyse the contradictions in South African society. It is Marxist dialectics which enables you to calculate the strength of opposing forces and decide what is to be done. That is why we are going forward today. Our people have no weapons, but they are going

forward and will defeat the enemy. The enemy is getting weaker by the day, but we are getting stronger.

AC: You have read *The Path to Power*, the Programme of the South African Communist Party adopted at its 7th Congress. Do you think this Programme has the capacity to mobilise large sections of our people?

HG: The Programme has already become a household word among our people, amongst the workers in the trade unions particularly. It shows them the way forward. It gives them the answers they have been looking for.



The ICU and the White Parliamentary Parties, 1921-1924

by Theresa Zania

A Study in Contradictions and Compromises

IN THE SECOND HALF OF 1920, Kadalie's Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) adopted its well-known anarcho-syndicalist-type constitution, the preamble to which was probably drawn up by somebody in the Industrial Socialist League of Cape Town. Amongst other things it stated:

"Whereas the interests of the workers and those of the employers are opposed to each other, the former living by selling their labour, receiving for it only part of the wealth they produce; and the latter living by exploiting the labour of the workers; depriving the workers of a part of the product of their labour in the form of profit, no peace can be between the two classes, a struggle must always obtain about the division of the products of human labour, until the workers through their industrial organisations take from the capitalist class the means of production..."¹

However, despite the radical fanfare with which the ICU indicated the influence of left circles on them, the development of the organisation was to be extremely contradictory in the following period. This contradictoriness was not unrelated, in general terms, to the renewed capitalist offensive which was to take place, not only on the South African front, but world-wide, being referred to at the time in the literature of the international communist movement as the "partial stabilisation" of capitalism.

General Smuts, at the behest of the mineowners, used the economic depression which emerged in South Africa at this time to begin the onslaught on the living standards of the South African workers which the ruling class had been planning for some years. The mineowners' offensive aimed, in particular, at a re-organisation of the labour and production process which would enable them to extract more labour from the whole work force, black and white, at a lower cost than before.

Smuts's regime was characterised by brutality against both black and white sectors of the emerging South African working class. The Smuts forces, following on their brutal suppression of the strike of 70,000 African mineworkers in February 1920, in October 1920 turned their guns on an unarmed crowd in Port Elizabeth which had assembled outside the central police station after the arrest of the black workers' leader, Samuel Masabalala. Twenty four people were killed and over 50 were wounded. The following months the authorities finally decided to rid themselves of Clements Kadalie, who was clearly coming increasingly under the influence of left circles and was regarded as a threat to the electoral position of Smuts's so-called South African Party (SAP) amongst the black voters of the Cape.

Kadalie was informed that, as he fell into the category of a prohibited immigrant, he was being refused permission to remain in the country. However, he was given a right of appeal and finally, after a series of behind-the-scenes manoeuvres, the deportation order was withdrawn. Although Kadalie never directly admitted it, it is clear that the main factor in the withdrawal was an undertaking that he would throw his weight behind the Smuts party in the coming general election of February 1921². This opportunist move certainly contributed to the ICU's contradictory development in the following period.

ICU and the White Parliamentary Parties

The vacillating political positions which the ICU leaders assumed in the years 1920 to 1923 reflected the setback which the embryonic African national liberation movement experienced in those years when, after the upswing of 1917 to 1920, it went into retreat. Although the Cape-based ICU did not quite lose its African mass orientation in these years nor its aim to build a "One Big Union" encompassing the whole country, the unfavourable conditions clearly had their effects. Amongst other things, a certain regional narrowness of outlook developed³ as well as a weakening of the independent political stance which had begun to emerge especially during 1920.

The Cape black vote had become of growing importance for the two main white parliamentary parties, the governing South African Party and General Hertzog's opposition Nationalist Party (NP). At this juncture in South African politics, the Nationalist Party clearly had a good chance, if it played its cards correctly of upsetting the Smuts party which, especially since its merger with the Unionist Party, the party of the mineowners, in November 1920 had come to represent the latter's interests even more directly than before.

The ICU could hardly avoid involvement in the political machinations of the time. We cannot forget, as I noted in my first article, that the ICU had actually been formed, at the behest of white labourites, partly for the purpose of participating in electoral politics. Now, however, it looked as though the ICU had changed sides in the electoral game, moving out of the sphere of influence of the labour and left circles of Cape Town into the arms of that chief representative of the ruling class, General Smuts.

The ICU was not alone. The two leading organisations of the African and Coloured people, the ANC and the African Political Organisation (APO), had traditionally tended to move in the sphere of influence of the English-speaking parliamentary parties and to be hostile to the representatives of white labour and Afrikaner nationalism. From the time of the February 1921 election, it appeared that the ICU, after an unorthodox start, was following this general tendency.

However, the situation in regard to the ICU was not so simple. Soon after the 1921 general election, it appeared that the ICU leaders would rather tack between the parliamentary parties, attempting to gain the good offices of all. In May 1921 in the aftermath of yet another shooting incident provoked by the Smuts forces, in Bulhoek near Queenstown in the eastern Cape, where 163 Africans were killed and 129 wounded, many seriously, Kadalie wrote to General Hertzog to ask him for a donation to a fund for the victims and congratulated him on his efforts in parliament where Hertzog had demanded a commission of inquiry.

Also notable in regard to the development of the ICU at this time is that its eastern Cape section, under the leadership of Samuel Masabalala, was in favour of supporting the Labour Party⁴. But the ICU's annual conference which was held in Port Elizabeth in October 1921 at the time of the first anniversary of the "Port Elizabeth massacre", the Cape Town representatives argued against supporting the Labour Party⁵. Eventually a resolution was adopted that the ICU

“dissociate itself from any political body whatever, but declares that its objectives are solely to propagate the industrial, economic, and social advancement of all the African workers through industrial organisation on constitutional lines.”

This decision however certainly did not put an end to continued contacts with the political parties.

Despite the pressures which continued to be exerted in favour of the South African Party, it is clear that the ICU did not break off its close relations with left circles in Cape Town though a breach with the Democratic Labour Party and in particular J.H. Dean, former organiser of the ICU, had taken place in early 1921⁶. The friendship with the Communists was maintained.⁷

The 1922 Strike

Of especial interest is the reaction of the ICU leaders to the strike and uprising of the white workers on the Rand in the early months of 1922. There were strong pressures on the black organisations to take the side of the government and the mineowners. A key to the situation of the blacks during the strike was that the ruling class had been extremely successful in its manoeuvres to centre the clash, not on the wages question, nor on the question of retrenchments and the issue of indentured African labour, the abolition of which had formerly been a key element in the programme of the South African Labour Party (SALP).

Instead the confrontation took place around the “job colour bar”, and the slogan of a “white South Africa” came increasingly to the fore. In this way, the mineowners and the government had managed to remove the threat which had come to worry them even before the outbreak of the First World War, that one day the black and white workers would unite on a scale which would prove a serious danger to imperialist-colonialist exploitation in South Africa.

The fact that the strike became centred on the defence of the job colour bar ensured, in the first place, that the African mineworkers would not come out on the side of the white workers. Indeed, as it turned out, African miners even assisted mine officials in protecting mine property during the strike.

The government and the mineowners largely succeeded in giving the impression that their attempt to break the strike was morally justified

Attacks by whites on blacks were used to justify the government's declaration of martial law on 10 March and the army moved in to smash the strike. The black organisations were conceived of by the government as mere tools in this manoeuvre. Thus the Transvaal Executive of the Congress asked the government to proclaim martial law or to supply Africans with arms for self-defence; and the APO on the 9th requested Smuts to protect Coloureds and Africans against "cowardly murders" by armed bands of strikers.⁸ On the other hand it is notable that the ICU leaders held back. It was only after the declaration of martial law that the ICU finally came out against the strike. At a meeting on 12 March, on the Grand Parade in Cape Town Kadalie put a resolution — seconded by that political opportunist Bennett Newmans — which, while admitting the right to strike, expressed abhorrence at the "murderous onslaught by the white strikers on the Rand on the defenceless and peaceful natives and coloured people". It also came out against the job colour bar and called upon the government "to take such measures immediately to effect the abolition of this obnoxious and unjust discrimination".⁹

The relative lateness of the reaction of the ICU suggests that the ICU leaders had contradictory feelings about supporting the government. The speeches made at the meeting by some of the ICU leaders, including references to their "friends, the socialists", indicate again that they felt uncomfortable about the steps they were taking. In this connection, it should be remembered that the Communist Party supported the strike, stressing that its main content was the defence of the workers' living standards against the onslaught of the mineowners and that its defeat would mean a defeat for both the white and the black workers. Also noteworthy was that the Cape Federation of Labour Unions with which the ICU had been closely linked since the days of its foundation, though it adopted a reserved attitude to the strike because of the colour bar direction it had taken, by no means put itself on the side of the government.

An element which played an undoubted role in persuading the ICU finally to take up a position on the side of the government had to do with the pressures which stemmed from the time of Kadalie's deportation and the decision to support the SAP in the election of February 1921. Notable is that Will Stuart, the SAP Member of Parliament for Tembuland who had played a key role in the lifting of the deportation order, actually spoke at the ICU meeting on 12 March and it cannot be excluded that it was he who drew up the resolution¹⁰ That the danger of Kadalie being deported had not been removed is suggested by the fact that as late as 1923 the Commissioner of

Police advised the Ministry of the Interior to reconsider the withdrawal of the deportation order.¹¹

Increasingly the strike had begun to shift outside the realm of a working-class action and to take on the aspect of a petty-bourgeois nationalist revolt. In the towns of the Rand all sorts of small shopkeeping elements as well as the petty-bourgeois leaders of the Nationalist and Labour Parties began to play a decisive role in influencing the direction of the strike. It should also be remembered that at the end of the war Afrikaners comprised 75 per cent of the white labour force on the mines. In this total situation it was inevitable that a strong Afrikaner republican element, with a likewise strong anti-African tendency, began to influence the strike.

But the leader of the Nationalist Party, when offered the chance to call a republic into being, turned it down. In fact, they were never whole-heartedly behind the strike for aspiring capitalists — and, indeed, capitalists of a thoroughly colonialist type — they were, in principle, not in favour of the use of the strike weapon at all. Rather, they wanted to use the confrontation in the interests of their electoral ambitions. Thus Tielman Roos, NP leader of the Transvaal, urged the strikers:

“Your best strike weapon is the General Election. At the next one you will sweep the Smuts Government from power and so remove a great obstacle to our progress.”¹²

And, as it turned out, the 1922 strike served, above all, as a prelude to the 1924 general election which brought the Nationalist Party to power, in alliance with the (white) Labour Party.

Aftermath of the Strike

The harshness with which the authorities dealt with the strike, together with the political manoeuvring of the Nationalist Party leaders, ensured the growing isolation of the Smuts government. In the tense atmosphere which followed the defeat of the white workers the parliamentary parties competed for the black vote. Even before the strike, the NP leaders had begun to turn their attention to the blacks. In a letter to Kadalie in response to the latter's request to him for a donation to the Bulhoek fund referred to above, Hertzog wrote cordially, *inter alia*:

"It is for us by our common endeavours to make this country that we love so much, great and good. In order to do that we must not only ourselves to be good and great, but we must also see that there is established between the white and black Afrikaner that faith in and sympathy with one another which is so essential for the prosperity of a nation...¹³

The suggestion contained in this letter, despite its pompous and vague moralising formulations, was that there existed a possibility for an alliance between white and black South Africans in the pursuit of national aspirations. This idea was spelt out more clearly in a message from D.F. Malan, leader of the NP in the Cape, to a meeting of Africans in Queenstown:

"No race has shown greater love for South Africa than the Natives. Therein he, the Native, assuredly is a pattern of true patriotism and is entitled to take his place side by side with the Nationalists in the common political arena."¹⁴

Despite the pretence of the Smuts government that it wished to treat black and white even-handedly,¹⁵ the lesson of earlier events was that Smuts's "even-handedness" amounted to bloody repression. This was underlined by the Bondelswarts expedition of May and early June 1922, when Smuts dispatched an armed force to South West Africa to suppress a revolt of the Khoi-Khoi people who were protesting against the imposition of a dog tax. At least 115 were killed. Although for tactical reasons Hertzog left it to the Labour Party politicians on this occasion to condemn Smuts, they in effect repeated the point which Hertzog had made in the context of the '22 strike — that Smuts's "platskiet politiek" (policy of shooting down) was directed against both black and white. Thus Thomas Boydell portrayed Smuts as "a cold pitiless man to be trusted to kill if necessary" and R.B. Waterston condemned him as "the bloody Jeffreys of South Africa"¹⁶

Communist Warning

In the aftermath of the strike, too, the warning made by the Communists during the conflict that the blacks themselves would gain nothing from its defeat, rather the opposite, was confirmed. The revision of work schedules, together with other forms of reorganisation of the work force, served to extract more labour not only from the white miners but also from the blacks without any increase of pay to the latter and the lowering of the wages of the former.

There was widespread disappointment amongst the black people. Even that usual loyal supporter of the political party of the Rand mine magnates, Dr. Abdul Abdurahman of the APO, noted during 1922 that skilled wages had been depressed without any increase in unskilled wages. It was time, he said, for Africans to organise and resort to passive resistance against "the demands of the overseas vampires whose interest in our country is governed solely by the desire of big dividends".¹⁷ The abolition of the legally-enforced job colour bar in mines and works in 1923 by a decision of the court also brought no improvements for the African workers.

There was anger, too, at the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, depriving Africans in urban locations of the right to freehold ownership and extending the system of influx control based on passes and the setting up of special African locations, to the Cape Province. The consternation of the African leaders was further aroused by the comment made by Smuts after an ANC delegation had put its views to him that the "intellectuals" of the Congress did not represent the African people¹⁸. Thereupon the ANC at its annual conference in July passed a resolution of no confidence in Smuts in his capacity as Minister of Native Affairs and another resolution stated that "the time has come when the Bantu people should consider the advisability of supporting a Republican form of government for this country."¹⁹

The African leaders were deeply disappointed that the loyalty which they had displayed in the course of the Rand strike was to be so recompensed. By the second half of 1923 there were indications that Kadalie's ICU, after an especially contradictory period in its political-ideological development, was shifting ground, whereas previously its leaders had bent over backwards, for example, to deny any Communist sympathies²⁰. It was now once again beginning to take up a more critical stance in relation to the ruling class, headed by the mineowners. Articles began to appear in the ICU newspaper, *The Workers' Herald* — founded in May 1923 — which were sharply critical of the recruiting system and of the conditions on the mines. A leading article in the issue of 21 July 1923 expressed disappointment at the failure of the African mineworkers to obtain any improvements in their conditions in the wake of the white workers' strike:

"We would have welcomed new recommendations from the Native Recruiting Corporation as to increased wages, reductions of working-hours, better compensation for miners' phthisis, etc., on behalf of the African workers on the Rand as a reward of (*sic*) their non-interference with the great strike. To the contrary, we still witness (the) recruiting system in full swing in the Union."²¹

The people of the Cape were beginning to feel, more intensely than in the previous phase of development, the effects of the recruiting system. In face of an increasing shortage of black labour, the government and in particular its Ministry for Railways and Harbours began to import labour from Natal and the Transkei into Cape Town where the labourers were housed in barracks.²²

Falling Wages

It was from this time that black wages in the Cape began markedly to fall.²³ In response to this situation the ICU began to participate in the Cape Unemployment Committee, an organisation which included representatives from the white labour movement as well as from the Communist Party and was under the secretaryship of the Communist, William Green, who, indeed, became closely involved in ICU affairs.²⁴

Another notable indication of the consolidation of the colonialist system, directed against the African people in particular, was the new industrial relations act which the government submitted in 1923 and which was passed by parliament in 1924. The aim of the act was essentially to deflate, by setting up conciliation machinery, the explosive tendency in the relations between the employers and the white workers which had emerged in the series of clashes with the white workers going back to before the outbreak of the World War and culminating in the dramatic 1922 outbreak. The Act excluded from the definition of "employee" all those whose contract of service was regulated by the Native Labour Regulation Act of 1911, the provincial pass laws and Natal's Indian labour statutes. Wage earners who were not "employees" (i.e. the bulk of African and Indian workers) could neither belong to a trade union registered under the Act nor sit on industrial councils and conciliation boards.

Moreover, the Act served to carry a decisive step further the policy of the ruling class, represented by Smuts, of creating machinery *at a non-government level* for the strengthening of the job colour bar. Thus, acting in conjunction with the apprenticeship committees — also a Smuts government creation — the industrial councils restricted entry into the skilled trades and gave white workers preferential access to skilled and semi-skilled occupations. In this way, the SAP government not only effectively excluded Africans from legally recognised trade unions, but also, through the back door, ensured the privileged position of the white workers and a hardening of the division between white and black workers.

The ICU conference which took place in January 1923 called for representation of African workers on industrial boards, and it was clear that the organisation at this time was beginning to see the emergence of open hostility to the Smuts government. After the conference during interviews with various members of the government it was made clear that the Smuts regime had no interest in seeing a rise in wages of the African people.²⁵

The 1924 Election

The fact that Kadalie's ICU threw in its lot with the Nationalist-Labour Pact in the general election of 1924 has been frequently misinterpreted. It was not purely opportunistic. The Communist Party also supported the Pact and here again this did not mean that it simply tailed behind the Labour Party.

There were, in fact, more basic reasons for Communist and ICU support for the Nationalist-Labour Pact, arising from the historical situation at the time. One factor was the relative weakness of the working class, especially the black working class, and the national liberation movement, both in the structural and more directly political sense. At the ideological level, the political immaturity was reflected in the anarcho-syndicalist tendency which was a form of economism. This tendency was a reflection of, and served in its turn to strengthen, the inability of the relevant organisations to take up fully independent political positions so that they tended to tail behind other — essentially petty bourgeois — political forces.

However, there was a more basic situation which influenced the fact that the left forces ended up by tailing behind the Afrikaner nationalist forces in the election and this had to do with the relatively sharp crisis of the system of imperialist relations which emerged in South Africa at this time.

The central problem was: what class forces could head the struggle for the achievement of the country's truly national development? The imperialists, and British imperialism in particular still occupied powerful positions, and it should not be forgotten that before the Second World War South Africa, despite its status as a Dominion, was still essentially a colony or semi-colony. The British imperialist forces, and in the first place the mineowners, were not willing to undertake a programme based essentially on the development of secondary industry because it ran counter to their own predatory policies based on primitive exploitation of the country's natural and human resources.

The emerging national liberation movement represented by the Communist Party, the ANC and the ICU was still too weak. Indeed the national liberation movement had not yet properly taken shape ideologically or organisationally. On the other hand the white labour and peasant (bywoner) movement which showed its head in the 1922 strike had no future as an independent political force because, infected with strong racist-colonialist attitudes, it gravitated under the influence of the colonialist-conservative, largely land-owning but aspiring capitalist forces represented by the Nationalist Party.

As history has demonstrated, the Nationalist Party, while it undertook a certain sort of leadership in national development, gave up the struggle for a genuine republic and joined the imperialists to divide the colonialist spoils. The end result of their activities was that what development there was was truncated and distorted, and served merely to reproduce the crisis at the *higher level that confronts us all today*.

At the time of the 1924 election there were elements in the Communist Party who, as it became more obvious that the Nationalists were going to throw in their lot with imperialism and with the mineowners in particular, began to voice their reservations about giving Hertzog and the Labour leader Creswell a free hand.²⁶ There were even suggestions that the Communist Party should put up its own independent candidates. However, such warnings came too late and in any case the overall situation was not conducive to such a politically independent move on the part of the left forces in South Africa at the time.

NP Propaganda

The essential political weakness of the Nationalist Party's position was reflected in its election propaganda. It put forward an essentially "(white) working class line" (of a non-independent type!). True, this was, in part, determined by the fact that, since its leaders had thrown overboard their anti-imperialism, it was necessary for them to shift attention away from the mere national-oriented political questions. However, a crucial aspect was that they sought specially to disguise, by a form of social demagoguery, their colonialist capitalist ambitions.

The Nationalists required a social and political base, in the first place, in the white working class, and many of the white workers still saw the cheap labour system, directed against African labour, as the main problem. Thus much of Nationalist propaganda, prior to the 1924 election, turned on the theme of the necessity to protect the living standards of the workers, and in

the first place, the white workers from the threat posed to it by the cheap, near slave-labour system of "Big Finance". To the extent that the leaders of the NP did not intend to abolish the cheap labour system and, indeed, aimed to consolidate and extend it in their own interests, this line of propaganda constituted a hypocritical election manoeuvre. Nonetheless, that they were forced to adopt it, pointed to the essential weakness of their position, reflected above all in the necessity to enter into an electoral pact with the Labour Party.

The weakness of both parties was also reflected in the need to make concessions, at least at the level of propaganda, to the Coloured population in particular but also to the African urban population. The racist intentions of the Labour Party were exposed in the following passage from its election manifesto:

"In Native affairs, the present policy of 'drift' must be succeeded by a coherent and definite national policy, which shall recognise the difference in the economic standards of the Natives and the Europeans".

The manifesto then went on:

"It is a national necessity that a firm stand be taken against the present process, by which the wage level of the least civilised Native is used as a lever to pull down, in turn, the standards of the Native who aspires to a civilised life, of the Coloured man, and of the European workers."²⁷

The Nationalists, too, especially in their propaganda in the Cape, tended to use the term, "civilised labour policy", rather than "white labour policy".

It was such election propaganda that led the ICU leaders to hope for improvements from a Hertzog government including, it seems, at the level of minimum wages legislation.²⁸ It was also in this framework that the ICU leaders came to the conclusion that the segregation policy of the Nationalists did not perhaps represent such a threat to the African people as was sometimes believed. Thus it was apparently hoped that the Nationalists might grant a meaningful amount of extra land to the African people, with the aim of slowing down the flow of African labour to the towns.

Far more so than the Communist Party, the ICU leaders apparently found the nationalist thrust of the NP propaganda attractive. In this connection, it cannot be excluded that certain elements in the Cape Town leadership of both the ANC and the ICU were hoping that the segregation policy of a Nationalist Party government might serve well that sector of the

African petty-bourgeoisie which was looking for certain neo-colonialist-type opportunities for developing black business. Here one must bear in mind particularly the Garveyite James Thaele, who became closely involved with the ICU in the second half of 1923 and was to succeed Mahabane as President of the Cape Congress. Garveyite influence in the ICU was considerable at this time, as can be seen from a glance at the ICU newspaper, the *Workers' Herald*, in the second half of 1923. The influence of Garveyism indicated the inability of the ICU leaders at this time to adopt genuinely independent political positions and reinforced the tendency for the ICU to become attached to one or another of the white parliamentary parties.

By the second half of 1923, leading figures in the ICU as also in the Cape Congress were well on the way to taking sides in the election.²⁹ They evidently thought it right to go along initially with the tactic of putting pressure on the white parliamentary parties to adopt policies more in line with African aspirations, a tactic which seems to have emerged from the ANC.³⁰ Shortly before the election they then switched over to the line that it was necessary to have a change of government, i.e. they adopted essentially the position of the Communist Party and, indeed, of the Unemployment Committee (now the Unemployed and Relief Workers' Union)³¹ for a vote against Smuts (rather than direct support for the Pact). However, despite such careful formulations, it was clear that a vote against Smuts could only be expressed through electoral support for the Pact. In any case, immediately after an ANC meeting in Bloemfontein in May, Kadalie, Samuel Masabalala, James Thaele and Johnson Dlwati (the latter a leading figure in the Cape Congress) met Hertzog and, on returning to Cape Town, Kadalie campaigned on behalf of the Nationalist-Labour Pact. No doubt, the desire to back the winning horse and, thereby, to perhaps gain concessions from a new government were not unimportant factors in the decision. The National Party leaders were clearly not averse to allowing the black voters to gain the impression that concessions were on their way.

References

1. Taken from the ICU's 1925 constitution.
2. Clements Kadalie, *My Life and the ICU*, London, 1970, p.49.
3. This is reflected in the report of its 1923 conference. See *Official Report of Proceedings*, brochure, Cape Town.
4. Masabalala had, in fact, supported the Nationalist Party in February 1921. Wickins, pp. 62-3.
5. Wickins, pp. 65-66.
6. Wickins, p. 37.
7. See *Cape Times*, 13 March 1922.
8. H.J. & R.E. Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950*, London, 1969, p.295.
9. *Cape Times*, 13 March 1922.
10. I believe that the fact that Kadalie held Vernon responsible was a manoeuvre to take attention off the actual drafter. See *My Life*, p. 50.
11. Wickins, p. 67.
12. Transvaal Strike Legal Defence Committee, Johannesburg, 1924, p. 12.
13. *My Life*, p. 59.
14. Edward Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope*, London, 1966, p. 184.
15. This was even in regard to trade union rights. See, for eg., speech by Will Stuart in *Cape Times*, 13 March 1922. Also see ICU interview with F.S. Malan in *Cape Times*, 22 May 1922.
16. *Cape Times*, 24 May 1923.
17. *APO*, 4 Nov. 1922.
18. *Workers' Herald (WH)*, 22 Oct. 1923.
19. *Friend*, 10 July 1923.
20. See *International*, 18 May 1923 and *Report of Proceedings*.
21. *WH*, 21 July 1923.
22. *International (Int)*, organ of CPSA, 4 May, 24 Aug., 1923, 18 Jan. 1924.
23. *Report of Native Economic Commission, 1930-1932*, pp. 1027, 1028.
24. For Unemployment Committee see scattered issues of *Int.* between April 1923 and April 1924.
25. See *Report of Proceedings*.
26. See, for eg., *Int.*, 18 April, 2 May, 16 May, 1924.
27. *Friend*, 9 May 1924.
28. For ICU expectations see "Civilised Standard" in *WH*, 27 March 1926 and "National Secretary's Report for 1925" in *WH*, 28 April 1926.
29. See Thaele in *WH*, 21 July 1923 and Kadalie in *WH*, 25 Sept. 1923.
30. For an outline of the moves see Wickins, pp. 76-80.
31. For line of the Unemployment Committee see *Int.*, 11 Jan. 1924.



AFRICA

NOTES & COMMENT

by Jabulani Mkhathshwa

ALGERIA: PROMISED REFORMS WITH STRINGS ATTACHED

SOCIAL TENSIONS had been building up in Algeria for some time, leading to a situation in October 1988 which was characterised by various newspapers and journals in the country as a "crisis". A series of street conflicts, beginning in July 1988, ended in the killing of about two hundred people, mostly youngsters, by the police. People were voicing several grievances — inflation, shortages of basic goods and soaring prices of items such as soap and milk as well as complaints about housing shortages.

Speaking during an interview with *Al-Chaab*, Mohammed-Salah Yahiaoui, who retired from politics after failing to succeed in the run-up for the presidency following the death of Houari Boumedienne, talked of "a growing crisis of confidence in Algeria", and criticised the politicians who wielded enormous power but did not understand how to use it for the country's well-being.

By the beginning of 1989, this situation had begun to be analysed and recognised as a "crisis" even by the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN), which called for the adoption of a new constitution by referendum at the beginning of 1989. Following the results of the referendum, the FLN

government, for the first time after a long period, recognised in principle the right of other political parties to exist and function in the country. This meant in theory that all political parties which had been banned or which operated illegally, such as the Algerian Communist Party, were free to engage in active politics.

In practice, however, the FLN government created such preconditions for the registration of parties that, although the terms were couched in patriotic language, they created an impression which led even newspapers like *El Moudjahid* (the FLN mouthpiece) to call the exercise the "exorcising of the demons". According to the new legal framework governing the registration of political parties, the applicants have to have their background and credentials checked by the Ministry of Home Affairs, which has to satisfy itself that the party in question does not have an attitude or position contrary to Algeria's interests.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The 400 delegates to the FLN national conference in September 1989 endorsed President Chadly Benjedid's reform programme and confirmed the dismissal of Kasdi Merbah as Prime Minister. He was succeeded by Mouloud Hamrouche, a person believed by the President to be more capable of pulling the country out of the crisis and restoring public trust in the government. Hamrouche has already announced himself to be a reformer committed to the "democratic mechanisms"; that is, he stands against "the development of parasitic activities and against the administrative management of the economy". Whether or not the "crisis" situation will be resolved in the immediate future, will depend not so much on broad democratic slogans, as on whether or not those slogans will be backed by the implementation of economic and political policies in the interest of the country's economic growth as well as fair distribution of the wealth produced by the Algerian people. A truly democratic reform programme is one that does not merely fall from the top, but comes out of the people's own democratic perspectives.

ANGOLA: VIOLATIONS OF CEASEFIRE BY UNITA

IT SEEMS QUITE CLEAR NOW that UNITA never intended to honour the ceasefire accord signed in Zaire in the presence of Southern African heads of state in June 1989. For those who know UNITA intimately, its history and the biography of its leader, Jonas Savimbi, this development does not come as a surprise. UNITA was created, from the start, and continues to be supported by imperialism, for no other reason than to provide destabilisation of the popular republic of Angola. As soon as there are attempts to pull it out of this role, everything is done by its ideological and financial lords to secure it in the counter-revolutionary trench, even if this means dishonouring its own undertakings. Even President Mobutu of Zaire was compelled to express astonishment at Savimbi's statements as well as UNITA's actions following the Zairean accord. At the beginning of August 1989, Savimbi released a press statement which alleged that the Zaire Peace Accord, or the Gbadolite Declaration, had been organised too hastily, and its results were never accepted by him. President Mobutu found this statement to be at variance with reality and out of line with the agreement that was reached at the Zaire meeting. Mobutu went further in his response to reveal that, in fact, before the holding of the summit itself, on two occasions the President of Angola, Eduardo Dos Santos, and the UNITA leader, Jonas Savimbi, were received privately in Zaire by him in preparation for the formal signing of the accord on 22 June in the presence of African leaders. On all these occasions, continued Mobutu's statement, both parties reaffirmed their commitment to peace, which then led to "the historic handshake" between them and the declaration of a ceasefire at midnight on June 24.

Certainly, this was the impression gained not only by Mobutu, but also by all the African leaders that attended the summit. Speaking in Lusaka on the day following the signing of the accord, President Kaunda of Zambia described the occasion in Zaire as "a great moment for Africa", and said that he had "no doubt at all that reconciliation is real: it is genuine". President Mugabe of Zimbabwe was equally optimistic following the signing of the agreement, and even went to the extent of suggesting to the Mozambican government that the Gbadolite Declaration could ideally be adapted to Mozambican conditions in order to resolve their problems with the MNR.

What made this agreement such a celebrated document in the eyes of African leaders? Four basic terms of agreement were reached in Zaire.

Firstly, both parties agreed on a ceasefire, and the date, June 24, was fixed on the spot. Secondly, Savimbi agreed to recognise President Dos Santos as the leader of the People's Republic of Angola, and also that he would personally leave Angola "until such time as his services or presence may be needed". Thirdly, President Dos Santos, on behalf of the MPLA Workers' Party and the government of Angola, agreed to a commitment to work for the formation of a "government of national unity" through the implementation of a comprehensive policy of national reconciliation. Fourthly, the Angolan government agreed to integrate UNITA members within all sectors of the national life, including the armed forces, police and prison services.

Following this agreement, Jonas Savimbi was quoted by several western newspapers as confirming that he was happy about the Zaire agreement and the conditions establishing the ceasefire. Certainly, this was also the understanding of the People's Republic of Angola, which issued directives for the rehabilitation of the Benguela railway which has been closed by UNITA counter-revolutionary actions. Mention was even made within Angolan government circles, according to a Portuguese newspaper *Lusa*, that governorships of some provinces were to be offered to UNITA.

ATTACKS RESUMED

But before the ink had dried on the agreement, UNITA had resumed its attacks on Angolan civilians and sabotage against its infrastructure. Between June 24 and July 27, 1989, UNITA's violations of the ceasefire had already caused more than 200 dead among military and civilian Angolans. These figures were given at a press conference by Major General Roberto Leal Monteiro "Ngongo", first Deputy Chief of Staff of FAPLA. During this period, he said, UNITA had mounted 50 ambushes against the government and private vehicles and made more than 50 attacks on civilian centres, destroying many social and economic facilities.

"UNITA", he said, "has never shown that it wants peace, since its leadership daily issues orders to its military forces to carry out large-scale actions against economic targets, particularly the Benguela Railway and the city of Huambo, blatantly disregarding the decisions of the Gbadolite summit".

Similar remarks were made by President Dos Santos, who spoke in Luanda on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the proclamation of FAPLA at the beginning of August. UNITA, he said, "uses the language of peace while in practice assuming an attitude of war".

In mid-September, eight central and southern African leaders met, once again, in Zaire, this time on board President Mobutu's yacht on the Zaire River at N'Sele, to review the situation as well as to examine the reasons for UNITA's violations of the ceasefire. Savimbi had been invited personally by President Mobutu to the meeting, and was informed of its significance as well as of the attendance of heads of state, but he decided to stay away, thus mocking the efforts of all those who took the trouble to go to Zaire. President Kaunda, who chaired the meeting, confirmed that Savimbi had been invited to the meeting, and that in his absence nobody among the heads of state present could give judgement on UNITA's version of the situation.

Under the circumstances the heads of state present issued a communique reaffirming the earlier terms of agreements in June, and asked President Mobutu to give a copy to Savimbi for his signature.

ETHIOPIA: PEACE TALKS

TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM OF ERITREA

CONSISTENT WITH ITS LONG DECLARED POLICY of resolving the Eritrean problem peacefully, the Ethiopian government and parliament approved a resolution calling for a new initiative to resolve the problem of its northern province of Eritrea by negotiations with those claiming to be aggrieved by the character of the Ethiopian constitution. This development, it should be emphasised, was as a result of the initiatives of the Political Bureau of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia, which submitted a thesis to the parliament calling for talks with the secessionists without any preconditions whatsoever.

Both the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Tigre People's Liberation Front (TPLF) indicated their willingness to respond positively to this initiative. The difference between these two organisations is that the former claims to be fighting for independence, while the latter for more autonomy within an Ethiopian democracy.

The Ethiopian government has thus given priority to the resolution of the Eritrean question, and explained that whatever may have to be discussed with the TPLF in future will necessarily have to be considered after the Eritrean question has been agreed with the EPLF. The insistence of the

TPLF that it be given the same priority as the EPLF only shows a lack of sensitivity to a process that will, if sincerely approached, be resolved meaningfully once and for all.

The talks that began in Atlanta on 21 September, 1989, under the chairpersonship of Jimmy Carter, the former US president, made important progress, despite differences on the establishment of certain formalities such as who should be the African head of state to join Jimmy Carter as co-chairperson of the negotiations. On the Ethiopian government's recommendation, the resolution of this question has also to be seen to be the work of the African people. For this reason the Ethiopian government suggested that President Mugabe of Zimbabwe should be Jimmy Carter's co-chair. This was opposed by the EPLF, which wished that President Mubarak of Egypt be appointed instead.

Although this question is presented by the EPLF in the form of an African-Arab conflict, in actuality such an ethnic or racial distinction has little to do with the political substance at stake in the conflict. To demonstrate this, it is not the progressive Arab countries that the EPLF calls on to its side but those whose records make them unquestionable partners of *imperialism*, such as the present military rulers of the Sudan and Egypt. Nevertheless, it was agreed at the Atlanta Peace meeting that the countries to be invited to participate as observers in a broader forum of this negotiation process are to be what the negotiators considered as "the balanced combination of Arab and African countries", namely, Egypt, Kenya, North Yemen, Sudan, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

To demonstrate its sincerity in this whole political process, the Ethiopian government has released about 1000 prisoners, including the last remaining grandchildren of former Emperor Haile Selassie who had been kept in detention since the coup which overthrew the feudal monarch. Also, the Ethiopian government agreed to the demand of the EPLF that the proceedings of the meetings be recorded in order to inform the Ethiopian people about their progress and the nature of the issues raised.

SUDAN: WILL THE COUP LEADERS MAKE PEACE WITH THE SPLA?

ON FRIDAY JUNE 30 a group of army officers staged a coup in the Sudan and seized power by overthrowing the civilian government of Sadiq el Mahdi. The country's constitution was suspended and the Constituent Assembly, government, political parties and trade unions were dissolved. Over 80 prominent political and trade union leaders were detained without trial, among them the Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Sudan, Comrade Mohamed Ibrahim Nugud, and Comrade El Tygani Babiker who is the editor-in-chief of the party organ *El Meidan* and member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Party.

Speculation in Khartoum has it that the coup leaders will establish summary courts to liquidate their political opponents, in particular the former Prime Minister and the leaders of the Communist Party. The decrees that have been issued by the coup leaders give substance to this speculation. According to Decree No. 2, which was published by the daily organ of the armed forces, *El Quatt el Moussalaha*, "all political parties and formations are to be dissolved, their formation and activities banned and their properties confiscated by the state... All trade unions set up under any law are to be dissolved... Licences legalising all non-government institutions, press publications and mass media are to be abolished".

The authority which issues all these repressive decrees is called the "National Salvation Revolution Command Council". Obviously, there is nothing revolutionary about these decrees, nor do they provide any salvation for the Sudan. Instead, the coup reverses important democratic gains that had been won by the masses of the people after sixteen years of military dictatorship up to the March-April uprising in 1985.

While many people in the Sudan were deeply disappointed by the failure of El Mahdi's government to end chaos in the economy and war in the south, the recent coup saw none of the joyful demonstrations which greeted the 1985 uprising and the military takeover which restored democracy just one year later. This recent coup, therefore, has not only curtailed democracy but has also trampled on a rich history of struggle which was written by thousands of people from different political orientations. Under the slogan of "the failure of democracy", the coup leaders themselves issued resolutions

that suspended democracy, the constitution and declared a state of emergency.

CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE

One of the issues that the Sadiq el Mahdi government was gradually coming to realistic grips with was the peaceful and just settlement of the crisis in the south of the country by agreeing to participation in a constitutional conference with the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) led by John Garang. By contrast, the coup leaders have adopted a negative and irresponsible attitude to the conflict in the south. The new Command Council of the Revolution of National Salvation issued a declaration immediately after the coup that it intended uniting the Sudanese people "behind the pan-Arab banner", and described its relations with Arab states as being of "paramount importance". Such political sentiments are not likely to lead to a constructive spirit of dialogue with the SPLA. In fact, the coup leaders have been issuing threats and ultimatums to the SPLA.

A statement released by General Omar Hassan Ahmed el Bashir, the leader of the coup, said that they "are prepared to pardon those rebels who surrender. A one-month ceasefire will enable the rebels to make up their minds... to surrender".

Such naivete was coupled with talk of settling the Islamic law question by a referendum if direct negotiations with the SPLA fail. Aggressive plans to rebuild arms stocks and reintroduce conscription for the resumption of war are already being mooted. The SPLA, however, whose leadership have recently insisted that they are not fighting for the secession of the south but for an all-Sudanese revolutionary change, has scored several military victories during the past year. The capture of Bor, in the Upper Nile, gave the movement an important spiritual boost, for it is here that the SPLA was born in 1983. It is estimated that the SPLA now controls an area as big as Ghana, Gabon or Uganda. Large signs written "Welcome to New Sudan" have proliferated throughout the southern region.

Conditions in these liberated zones are as harsh as in any area ravaged by war. There is neither food nor medical care for the tens of thousands of sickly children whose only comfort is their mothers who fan away the flies adding irritation to misery. An epidemic of the fatal *kala azar* has taken the lives of more than ten thousand children in the south. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, more than 100,000 deaths were expected before the end of the first half of this year because of the difficulties in moving relief supplies. The effects of war have been aggravated by natural disasters.

All of this has led to the flight of millions of people to neighbouring countries where the relevant United Nations agencies have declared them refugees.

Unlike the other conventional liberated areas, the areas under the control of the SPLA are not organised. There are neither schooling facilities and education programmes nor an elaborate network of medical points. Fields have been left empty without any attempt to organise the peasants for elementary agriculture. Even the once proud southern pastoralists have now been reduced to the humiliating condition of beggars. Perhaps this is due to the vastness of the areas that have suddenly come under the command of the SPLA.

Yet these conditions cannot be altogether blamed on the SPLA nor, for that matter, on the war that it is waging against the Khartoum regime. This war was, in the first place, started precisely because of the grievances of the southerners about the miserable conditions in which they have been left by the Khartoum government. Long before the beginning of this war the southerners complained about the concentration of wealth and political power in the hands of the "northern-based minority". They complained that trading opportunities concentrated in Juba were monopolised by a few powerful northern merchants. They complained about an education system which openly favours the northerners and prohibits all but a handful of southerners gaining access to further education. They complained that the wealth of the fertile south, rich in minerals and agricultural potential, was denied to them because of discrimination by the north.

In other words, the essence of the war waged by the SPLA is essentially a class struggle. The fact that it assumes an ethnic or even religious character is because class struggle often takes the form of an immediate grievance at the level of social consciousness.

The fate of southern Sudan presents the classic problem of neo-colonialism in Africa. The roots of the problem go back to the pre-independence era. Economic investment was concentrated on the north which consequently developed an elaborate modern infrastructure while the colonisers merely plundered the south for slaves and regarded it as the source of cheap labour. After gaining independence in 1956, the Sudanese government did not challenge this social lopsidedness. Southerners continued to feel they were regarded as second-class citizens in their own country. Thus, when former President Gafaar Nimeiri decreed the Islamic Sharia law, according to which punishment for theft is amputation, and for adultery is death by stoning, the southern Christians saw this as further persecution by the Islamic north. They resorted to armed struggle.

Any peace effort to resolve the immediate problems caused by the war in southern Sudan is welcome and should be encouraged. Military coups, however, which deny the democratic process, cannot be characterised as part of that solution, for the Sudanese people are politically mature enough to resolve their problems without a small clique in society imposing its will on the majority. Analysis of the problems of the southern Sudan should also not fail to refer to the roots of the problem, which are to be found in the unresolved national question.



THE GROWTH OF TRADE UNIONS AND THE ROLE OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS

Key to Unity in the Liberation Movement by Dr E. Reed

There are many factors which have influenced the growth and consolidation of the radical trade union movement in South Africa. In particular I wish to demonstrate one such factor, namely the role of the black workers employed in the manufacturing sector of the economy.

THE STATISTICS USED IN THIS PAPER need qualification in as much as they class workers as black and white. That is not of course the classification of a normal society, but in South Africa such a classification is essential if we are to make any sense of the apartheid system of exploitation. Coloured and Indian workers have from time to time been subsumed into the white trade union movement. They have, however, often been there more by default of leadership than by desire of the workers themselves. In the recent era they have more and more come to realise that their place is with the African workers (indeed there are even straws in the wind that more and more white workers are beginning to sense the power of the African workers). I have thus, I feel justifiably, incorporated the Coloured and Indian workers with the Africans as black workers, especially since the statistics separating them as workers have become blurred in recent years. On occasion, however, I have separated the African worker from the black worker to emphasize a particular point.

COSATU, the biggest trade union federation in South Africa, does not make any distinction on the basis of colour. Other trade unions and trade union groupings follow this lead to a lesser or greater extent. The state, however, not only separates people on the basis of skin colour but also clearly discriminates against black people. Much of the state's statistical information is thus suspect. The facts of life in apartheid South Africa place colour at the centre of the agenda although logic would decree otherwise.

Economic Changes

Agriculture's percentage share of the gross national product has decreased from 21% in 1911 to 5% in 1984; that of all mining has decreased in the same period from 27% to 18% while that of manufacture has increased from 6% to 30%. This relative growth of the manufacturing industry is of particular significance.

It should also be noted that in mining the importance of gold has decreased. Coal mining now contributes an increasing share in this sector and is more closely linked with manufacturing.

Colour Composition of the Work Force

The South African economy has, since the coming of the white man, grossly undervalued the labour of black people compared to that of whites. In the period 1935 to 1985, in mining wages paid to white workers have been on average 12 times those paid to black miners (varying from about 20 times as much to about 5.5 times as much in recent years). In manufacture the ratio has averaged about 4.8 (from about 5.8 to 3.6). Black wages in all sectors of the economy are always considerably less than those of whites. Wages generally have increased but the gap between blacks and whites has increased with time. White miners get higher wages than whites in manufacture but blacks in mining get less than blacks in manufacture. Discrimination in mining is greater than in manufacture.

The rate of African unemployment as a percentage of the total African population has risen from 2.78% in 1970 to 19.2% in 1986. That of whites as a percentage of the total white population has risen from 0.22% to 3.7% in the same period. Over this period a black person has had on average 25 times as much chance of being unemployed as a white worker (varying from 50 to 5 times as great a chance). It must be remembered that the unemployment figures for the African population are if anything underestimated even by sympathetic academics. Unemployment among Africans both as a

percentage of the African population and in absolute terms is much higher than that of whites, leading to lower wages for Africans and also illustrating how Africans are devalued compared to whites.

Black labour being cheaper will, in spite of all other factors, eventually be preferred by employers. Opposition of organised white labour and racist politicians allowing, and providing the capitalist class retains state power, the employers will employ as large a percentage of black workers as possible. Capital is in essence driven by the lust for profit. The greater the rate of exploitation of the working people the greater the profit. If racial discrimination serves the purpose of keeping the rate of exploitation high the capitalist class will support it. If at the same time racial discrimination ensures their retention of political power this is an added bonus. The apartheid system of exploitation has so far assured them of these twin objectives.

If however expensive white workers can be replaced by cheaper black workers the capitalist will exert every effort to increase the percentage of black workers that he employs. The 1922 strike revolved around the attempt of the mine owners to employ black labour on the mines at lower rates than whites doing the same jobs.

Pressure for Readjustment

It is this basic drive to maximise the rate of exploitation that is again causing the capitalists to seek a readjustment of the old fashioned colour bar. This pressure for readjustment is increased by the changes from labour intensive to capital intensive production. Skilled labour is in greater demand.

White skilled labour is, skill for skill, much more expensive than black labour and it is also getting scarce. The rate of exploitation of skilled labour is also higher than that of unskilled labour. The thought of the exploitation of skilled workers at the wage rates of the unskilled black worker floods the soul of the capitalists with the blinding light of avarice.

Their problem is: can they replace white workers with black and still as a class retain political power?

The percentage of black people in the population at large has risen from 79.1% in 1945 to 86% in 1987. The percentage of blacks working in mining and agriculture has remained relatively stable over the years at a figure higher than that in the general population. For example the percentage of blacks in agriculture has during this period always been over the 90% mark. In mining

the figure hovers around the 89% mark. In a capitalist economy where black wages are lower than white due to race discrimination, one would expect the percentage of black workers in all areas of exploitation to be higher than their percentage in the population at large.

The proportion of black workers employed in manufacture is lower than in mining or agriculture, rising from 61% in 1951 to 77.5% in 1987. From the point of view of the employers, that is an “uneconomic” proposition.

This proportional under-employment of black workers in manufacture has been caused by many factors, not least the lack of technical skills due to the education policies of successive white governments. The percentage of technical posts held by black workers was 29% in 1945, rising to 41% in 1980, and falling to 37% in 1987. Such employment is still an extremely small percentage compared to the percentage of black people in the general population.

It is, however, instructive to look at figures for the percentages in administrative and managerial posts where the employment of black workers in fact decreased from 18% in 1951 to 5% in 1987. The percentage of the black population in managerial positions is even lower than in technical posts. Racial prejudice is so intense and the fear of black management of whites so pervasive that even greater financial rewards for employing blacks in such posts must be foregone. Or perhaps sufficient blacks cannot be found who are prepared to become *impimpi*? There were very few who were prepared to put themselves forward for election to administrative posts in the 1988 fraudulent elections.

Motive Forces

When economic pressures on the working people become unbearable, and they are not so suppressed that they cannot see the advantage, indeed the inevitability of confrontation with the employers, they organise themselves against even the greatest odds.

This is what happened with the white workers in the early years of this century. The first trade union organisation was in the print industry. Other trade unions followed, particularly in the mines which comprised the major economic sector. In 1915 there were some 10,000 whites in trade unions; by 1920 that number had risen to close on 200,000. This confrontation between labour and capital led to the Rand revolt of 1922. The employers and the state responded with the maximum use of force, coupled with the ready-made safety valve of racism to divert the wrath of the white workers and the

new system of control was instituted. Of course, it was not known as apartheid at that time.

Immediately after the Rand Revolt the white trade unions suffered considerable losses with a sharp drop in membership following the previous rapid rise (only 70,000 members by 1924). However the white workers learned to live as part of the new system, becoming in fact incorporated into the apparatus of the white capitalist state. White trade union membership slowly and consistently rose till the present day where it now stands at close to 500,000.

The Black Workers

The economic and political pressures on the black population in South Africa have steadily grown over the decades since the twenties and black workers' organisation has grown apace. The rise of their power is indicated in part by the number of times they have used the strike as a weapon to defend themselves.

The number of strikes by African workers per year never rose above 100 per year between 1900 and 1973. From 1973 to 1976 the figure hovered around 200 but from 1981 with 342 strikes the figure rose rapidly and dramatically to some 1148 in 1987. The number of person days per year lost to the employers in strikes by African workers remained below 380,000 over the years 1972 to 1984 but between 1985 and 1987 the number of person days lost rose steeply from some 650,000 to close on 6,000,000 in 1987 (industrial disputes only, not including political general strikes).

The first trial of strength between the African workers and the capitalists was by the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union in the years 1919-1928. In 1925 the number of Africans in the trade unions was about 30,000. This rose to an estimated 120,000 in 1927 and slumped to 30,000 in 1929. The next attempt was just after the second world war under the leadership of the Council of Non-European Trade Unions, in the period 1945-1947, when African trade union membership rose to some 150,000.

The South African Congress of Trade Unions, formed in 1955, led the next battle. African trade union membership rose from 20,000 in 1955 to 50,000 in 1959/61 but under the onslaught of the bosses and the apartheid regime it dropped to less than 8,000 in 1965. SACTU continued to struggle underground to revive the trade union movement amongst the African workers. The battle has now been joined above ground by the Congress of South African Trade Unions, formed in 1986, and others. Trade union membership almost doubled every two years from 1980 to 1987, 1980-

260,000, 1982-400,000, 1984-900,000, 1986-1,700,000, and in 1989 something over 2,000,000.

The graph of person-days lost indicates the intensity of the battle between the employers and the workers, while the number of strikes per year shows the widespread nature of their struggle. For example the major factor contributing to the large number of person-days lost in 1987 was the massive prolonged miners' strike.

The translation of this militancy into organisation is indicated by the trade union membership figures. The major significance of the past 3 to 4 years is that although the workers were militant and well led in the past they did not manage until recently to translate this into continued organised strength.

Economic Restructuring

The overall restructuring of the economy has been shown above but with each sector there have also been changes in technology with the concomitant necessity for the readjustment of the labour force to the new environment. Such restructuring causes ferment and discontent and must contribute to the pressures for unionisation. Clearly the work force has been subject to intense pressure by these changes. The rate of their exploitation has increased as also has their skill and the indispensability of their labour.

Farming has been restructured along capital intensive lines with the number of farms decreasing from 117,000 in 1950 to 70,000 in 1984. The number of tractors increased from 1,302 in 1926 to 285,000 in 1977. Farm workers are still relatively unorganised. Economic pressures, the concentration of labour into large units and increased skills do not of themselves lead to trade union organisation. The necessity and the desire may be present among the workers but forceful suppression by the employer and the state makes trade union organisation difficult.

In mining, despite changes in technology, the number of kilograms of gold produced per worker has not changed dramatically. Presumably the increased productivity of the years 1966/1970 has been balanced by the increasing difficulties in mining in later years. Mining is still a mainly labour intensive operation, depending on the widespread use of black (almost exclusively African) labour. This sector of the work force is now well on the way to full-scale organisation. The black mineworkers have a long history of struggle going back to the beginning of the century. However it is only recently that they have been able to translate this spirit of struggle into a continuing organisation, the National Union of Mineworkers.

Where considerable changes have taken place is in manufacture where a skilled work force is an imperative. With the growth of manufacture and the increasing percentage of black labour within that work force has come the wherewithal for the black worker to win from the bosses and the state recognition of his right to organise. The decade of black unionisation in South Africa was heralded by the rise of the trade unions in the manufacturing sector. The bosses in this sector had the strength and the cunning to force the white workers to acquiesce in the use of black labour on the production lines in the motor and other industries.

But with these changes came the development of a skilled, articulate, literate and enlightened sector of the black working class. This group of workers had a tradition of struggle both political and economic. They were not new to trade unionism. In 1919 they had formed the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union. In 1945/50 they had been in the Council of Non-European Trade Unions. In 1955 up till the late sixties they had laid the foundation of non-racial militant trade unionism under the South African Congress of Trade Unions.

Now the workers have found that they have economic power as well as the will, the desire and the skill to be organised. The decade of black trade union power had forced itself upon an unsuspecting South Africa. Being no longer able to bleed the black trade unions to death, the bosses have turned to the tactic of incorporation into the state apparatus via the Wiehahn commission. The commission only succeeded in loosening the cork in the bottle.

Where the workers in manufacture had broken through, the thousands of mineworkers followed, together with those in the commercial and service sector. The agricultural workers are now beginning to join the movement.

The genie is out of the bottle. Incorporation into the apartheid system of exploitation may have succeeded with the white workers, but can it succeed with the black? Any political changes which would be meaningful will have to entail the dismantling of that same apartheid system of exploitation.

Assault on the Unions

It would appear from the latest assault on the trade unions in South Africa that the apartheid regime has given up the belief that the new unions under the leadership of COSATU can be incorporated into the state system. They have launched an all-round assault on the unions using not only new refined methods of terror but copying the methods which have been developed in the United States of America and more especially the United Kingdom.

It is interesting to compare the growth of the trade union movement in the United States of America. Trade union membership waxed and waned for some 40 years between 1895 and 1935, never rising above 3.6 million. By 1960 however there had been a rapid rise to some 20 million. Since then however there has been a steady decline to under 17 million in 1985.

In the period from 1895 to the middle 1930's the main method used by the American bosses, backed by the state, was suppression by force. Workers and their leaders were beaten, shot, murdered, framed on trumped-up murder charges and arrested without charges. Their families suffered. Strikes were broken by armed thugs, the state guard and federal troops. Spies, racism, lies and the power of the yellow press were fully exploited to break the trade union movement.

However the attempt failed. In the middle 1930's capitalism in America was in the grip of the great depression. The more far-sighted political leaders were fearful that the continued use of naked force against the working class would only lead to pressure for revolutionary change. Under the leadership of Roosevelt the people of America elected a government which opened up the possibility for the workers to exercise their right to organise. It was known as the period of the New Deal.

In 1945 the end of the second world war against fascism gave impetus to the organisation of the American workers. There followed a sudden rapid increase in trade union organisation (3.6 million in 1935, 9 million in 1940 and 14.8 million in 1945). A feeling of unity prevailed, with the questions of racism and anti-communism relegated to the background.

The monopolists continued their opposition to the organisation of the workers and the disruptive tactic of anti-communism was assiduously employed. The rise of Senator McCarthy and the anti-communist witchhunt by the CIA and the right wing in the AFL-CIO resulted in the decline in trade union membership as shown in the period after the late 1950's.

Unity Must Be Preserved

All this contains a serious lesson for our working class. *We must never allow the noxious poison of anti-communism to destroy our unity.*

The unity of the liberation movement built over so many years of struggle by the alliance of the ANC, SACTU and SACP must be preserved.

We must never allow the methods used so successfully by the multi-nationals in the West against their trade unions to be imported into our movement in South Africa.

In South Africa the regime continues to use force against the trade unions. The creation of divisions based on anti-communism, on opposition to the ANC and the Freedom Charter, is part of the attack on our trade union movement. The regime is attempting to destroy the unity that has been created under the leadership of COSATU. There are powerful forces in the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions), in the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labour Congress of Industrial Organisations) and the ITS's (International Trade Secretariats) that are well trained in the use of the communist bogey to emasculate the trade unions in the western world. A close scrutiny of the activities of a number of leading personalities in for example FIET (International Federation of Commercial, Clerical, Professional and Technical Employees), IUF (International Union of Food and Allied Workers Association), PTTI (Postal Telegraph, Telephone International), and others will show how their actions have not assisted the creation of unity but have fostered division in various South African unions.

Now more than ever it is necessary to cherish trade union unity. The workers see apartheid and their immediate boss in clear focus as their problem. It is up to the leaders to keep the same clear focus on the enemy and to discuss and build unity amongst themselves.

Other problems lie ahead which are already having an impact on the strength of the trade union movement in our country. The provisional figures for 1988 indicate a possible decline in the number of strikes, in the number of person-days lost through strikes and in trade union membership.

The new Labour Relations Amendment Act is fashioned to a large extent along the lines of labour law of the Conservative government in the United Kingdom. In the UK these laws have severely reduced both the numbers of workers in trade unions and the social and economic strength of the British TUC.

The growth of trade union unity, both in breadth and depth, is the answer to these attacks. The formation of one union in the textile and garment industries SACTWU (South African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union) is to be welcomed, and we look forward to the leather workers joining it. The healing of the divisions in CCAWUSA is imperative and it is to be welcomed that the moves to form a breakaway hotel workers' union was rejected by the workers. Problems of unity are not solved by breakaway unions but by keeping the goal of the overthrow of apartheid clearly in view and by discussion and democracy within the unions building unity in action against the employers.

The creation of one teachers' union in education seems to have been unduly delayed. The winning of the nurses to the realisation that their place is in COSATU in a health workers' union is proving a long-term task. NEHAWU (National Education Health and Allied Workers' Union) was created to cater for both these groups of workers. The potential for such a union is enormous but the path to its realisation needs consistent organisational work and diplomacy. Its success is essential for the nurses, the teachers and the workers at present in NEHAWU.

The unity in action by COSATU, NACTU and other independent unions against the Labour Relations Amendment Act are steps along the right path.

In February last year workers representatives from trade unions affiliated to COSATU and NACTU, and from those unaffiliated to any centre, formulated tactics to fight the Act. The voices of those who placed their narrow sectarian perspectives above the needs of the struggle against the regime were ignored. The workers' summit was a massive success. The next workers' summit (there will surely be further summits) must embrace even wider circles amongst the workers' organisations.

Other Methods

Other methods of diverting the trade unions from participation in the task of destroying apartheid and taking the road to socialism are being cultivated.

Ideas long in use in Israel are being tried out in South Africa. For example in the textile industry in Natal, Framtex fired 1,500 workers and as part of a settlement with the union ACTWUSA gave the union R4.2 million with the idea of setting up a co-operative to be run by the union which will employ the workers. The profits of the co-op will, it has been proposed, be controlled by the union. There is a danger of the trade union becoming involved in the state system much as the Histadrud is in Israel. Because of opposition from the workers, there are moves for this co-op to be transferred from the control of the union to the control of the co-op workers themselves. This is certainly to be preferred.

The promotion of share owning and the formation of so-called trusts are all part of the promotion of the idea that the capitalist system is good for the workers and that they should somehow be prepared to have a share in their own exploitation.

It must be clearly borne in mind that the reason for the existence of the trade unions is the defence of the lives and interests of the workers and their families. This task is in the shorter term incompatible with the continued

existence of the apartheid system of exploitation and in the long term incompatible with the continued existence of the capitalist system.

There is thus no way that the trade unions can hope to continue to exist within the capitalist system other than as a contingent of the army of the people in their struggle to replace capitalism with a better socialist mode of production.

Capital will only allow trade unions to exist if they perform the role of taming the workers, not organising them to fight for freedom from exploitation.

Beware the temptation to accept reforms and blandishments as substitutes for struggle.





CUBAN REVOLUTION IN DEFENCE OF SOCIALISM

Cuba: The Test Of Time

by Jean Stubbs

(Latin America Bureau, London, 1989 pp.141)

In Defence Of Socialism

by Fidel Castro

(Pathfinder, New York, 1989 pp.142)

Che Guevara — Economics and Politics in the transition to Socialism

by Carlos Tablada

(Pathfinder, Sydney, 1989 pp.286)

Critics of the socialist system talk, nowadays, of the “crisis of socialism”, and point to some of the changing policies in some socialist countries, the most recent being Hungary and Poland, as an indication that the “pure” socialist system cannot deliver the goods to the population and that “the Communist movement has run out of steam”.

The current debate is whether or not socialism provides better economic performance than the capitalist system, or, to put the question closer to the real issues, whether on the one hand, more socialist methods or on the other hand partnership with capitalist enterprises can provide the solution for the immediate economic problems in socialist countries.

The answer to this question cannot be an abstract one, because one socialist country differs from the other in many ways. Each of them has to adopt methods of solving economic problems in a concrete way. There are no universal formulae enshrined in a textbook, from which socialists only have to learn well. Yet, equally, socialism is not merely a subjective economic development. The founders of scientific socialism demonstrated its superiority over capitalism, and through the eloquent articulation of historical materialism, demonstrated its universal and objective historical validity.

Leaders of the Cuban revolution have, indeed, joined this debate, and have made known their point of view to whoever remains a sceptic about the efficacy of socialism. During four speeches on the 30th anniversary of the Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro consistently pledged that the Cuban people will always remain loyal to the principles of socialism. He called on the young generation to improve and defend socialism. During the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Cuban revolution on January 1, 1989, Fidel said: "Socialism is and will continue to be the hope, the only hope, the only road for the peoples, the oppressed, the exploited, the plundered. Socialism is the only alternative! And today, when our enemies want to question it, we must defend it more than ever."

This unambiguous and uncompromising conclusion was made by Fidel within the context of the debate about the success of socialism. "We are going through a particular moment in the international revolutionary process", Fidel told half a million Cubans in Havana on 5 December, 1988. "As some socialist countries criticise what they have done for many years, as they even deny things that have been affirmed for decades on end", he said, it had become almost fashionable in the imperialist countries to proclaim the historical bankruptcy of socialism. "Imperialism is trying to present socialism as a failure in practice, as a system with no future. And it is extolling to the utmost the alleged advantages of its selfish and repugnant capitalist system".

Communist Frankness

In these four speeches, Fidel addresses himself to these issues, and does so with his typical frankness, the frankness of a Communist. He told the youth in one of the speeches that "we face a tremendous historic challenge",

and warned that the battle lines are drawn between capitalism and socialism in the competition of who will win, who will prevail. It is either the victory of the selfish, chaotic, and inhumane capitalist system or the more rational and humane socialist system. "And perhaps the greatest challenge is that this is a battle to improve socialism without resorting to the mechanisms and style of capitalism, without playing at capitalism". That theme, which was the principal thesis of the speech he delivered on 26 July, 1988, was that Cuba will never adopt capitalist methods.

In her book, Jean Stubbs, who has been an occasional visitor to Cuba and a Western admirer of the achievements of the Cuban revolution, provides useful statistics about the economic situation in Cuba. Not that this is new, but coming as it does at the time when some capitalist ideologists are questioning the success of socialism, such statistics are invaluable. Stubbs reminds us that of Cuba's 10,384,600 population, 98 per cent are literate. There is also a 100 per cent primary school enrolment. This compares interestingly with the 1958 figures just before the triumph of the revolution when only 56 per cent of the primary school children were enrolled in schools.

Again, life expectancy in Cuba is 74 years, compared with 57 years in 1958. Indeed, never have such dramatic results been achieved in the capitalist world within a matter of a single generation. The explanation for this achievement is, of course, not mysterious: it is the social policies of the Cuban Communist Party and government. More doctors have been provided to the population, achieving in 1988 a ration of one doctor to 400 people. Before the revolution, only one doctor was available for 5000 people. The number of hospital beds has also more than doubled in the past thirty years, and infant mortality per one thousand live births has been reduced from 60 to 13.

Economic Growth

What about the economy? Between 1981 and 1985 there was a 7.3 per cent economic growth, although between 1986 and 1988 there was a negative growth rate. However, having overcome those problems, which include the international market forces controlling the price of sugar, the first quarter of 1988 was already registering a growth rate of 8.6 per cent in the gross social product. Unemployment was down at 3.4 per cent. And all this is despite the fact that every Cuban citizen only pays 0.10 peso for bus fare and the maximum of 10 per cent of income for rent (in November 1988, 1 US dollar equalled 0.9 peso).

It may, of course, be argued, as has been done, that the Cuban economy is supported by the preferential economic trade with the socialist countries, particularly the Soviet Union, which takes 71.5 per cent of Cuban imported goods; equally, Cuba's imports from the Soviet Union amount to 72 per cent of its total imports. However, this argument is not often carried to its conclusion. The factor that is ignored by such critical analysis is that Cuba has been under economic blockade by the United States for decades. Yet, despite all the difficulties encountered, the Cuban people have achieved levels of development and an independence of spirit that gives Cuba a world presence incommensurate with its size.

Tablada, on the other hand, brings up an important methodological question in the development of socialism, the question of socialist morality and ethics. It was Che Guevara, then scoffed at by many economists, who insisted on the moral factor in the development of the socialist economy. He questioned, as all socialists do, the "profit" yardstick which is used by the capitalists to determine economic progress. It was Che in Cuba who symbolised the virtues of voluntary work, a practice that steadily became part of the Cuban economic tradition. This may all sound romanticist today, yet it was Fidel Castro himself who said in 1987 that one of the mistakes that the Cuban revolution was beginning to commit was to assume that socialism functioned automatically whether or not a socialist person, a socialist cadre, had been developed. In a speech on the 35th anniversary of the Moncada, Fidel said:

"In the sphere of material production and the services we started believing everything would run perfectly with the economic management and planning system... a panacea that would almost build socialism by itself... many of our comrades dressed up as capitalists, started acting like capitalists, but without the capitalists' efficiency... Capitalists who manage to survive competition are demanding, very demanding, or else they don't survive. Where there is no competition, if the motivation prompting the owner in a capitalist society to defend his personal interests is out of the question, what is there to substitute? Only the cadres' individual sense of responsibility, the role played by cadres..." (Speech to mark the 35 years since the Moncada attack).

These three books are a worthwhile reminder of the difficult task socialists have to perform to demonstrate to the world, once again, that what they are fighting for is a real alternative to the misery of capitalism. In this regard, Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution emerge as the uncompromising symbols of this fight.

Sisa Majola



STOP THE BIRTH OF A FOURTH REICH

from BSA, Berlin, German Democratic Republic

Dear Editor

These days in some east European socialist countries and on the left in west capitalist countries there is talk about the need for a common European Market/Home. There are also schools of thought that a united Europe should also comprise the socialist states of east Europe. Certainly good neighbourship and stability in Europe are essential ingredients for the success of the policy of "co-operation not confrontation". Stability and co-operation in Europe besides being a positive contribution to world peace would also create favourable conditions for waging struggle against the developed capitalist countries' expanding neo-colonialist exploitation of former colonies. Stability and co-operation in Europe would also be an important factor in finding solutions to regional conflicts.

Since the development of capitalism, both in its trading and imperialist stages, European bourgeois policy has been highlighted by aggressive wars of genocide, dispossession and enslavement of other peoples and countries. The African slave trade, an innovation of the British bourgeoisie in capitalist conditions, stands to the everlasting shame of European imperialist aggression which enabled the European bourgeoisie to enrich itself and expand.

It was from central Europe that two world wars started due to the ambitions of the most aggressive and chauvinistic circles of German finance-monopoly-capital to colonise and dominate the world.

The peace and other democratic forces in the west, like in the east, are well aware of the ambitions of narrow German nationalism and stand in the forefront of the struggle to bring about stability and co-operation in their common European home. They are also conscious of the fact that stability and co-operation in Europe will be a positive contribution to the wellbeing of peoples in other parts of the world.

It is necessary that some east European socialist countries as well as the left in the west should closely examine the German question in relation to the aims and ambitions of the aggressive and reactionary forces of European imperialism concerning the Common Market or united Europe idea. In this connection coming evermore to the fore is the demand that Germany should be united as an essential ingredient for a common European Market/Home.

Chauvinism

What lies behind this demand? To answer this question we must look at the mounting tide of German chauvinism with its base and resources in the Federal Republic of Germany, FRG. We must examine the influences of this narrow German nationalist drive on sections of the population of the German Democratic Republic, GDR, and ethnic Germans of Polish, Hungarian, Romanian, Czech and Soviet citizenship. We should view how this spread of German chauvinism extends to Namibian, South African and Latin American ethnic Germans.

Both the FRG and the GDR are sovereign independent states with different social systems — one capitalist, one socialist. Both are members of the United Nations Organisation. This is the reality of the situation resulting from the Second World War and the crushing of Hitler fascism.

Following the crushing of Hitler fascism the victorious allied powers (USSR, USA, Britain and France) meeting in Potsdam agreed — “It is our firm intention to destroy German militarism and National Socialism (Nazism, BSA) . . . We are determined to bring all war criminals to trial and make sure that they are punished forthwith.”

The terms of the Potsdam Agreement, entrenched in international law, have been carried out and honoured in the GDR, founded in October 1949. A consistent feature of the history of the FRG, founded May 1949, has been the betrayal of the principles of Potsdam. The betrayal of these principles ensured that the German monopolies were restored to their former positions

of power — the very monopolies which financed, backed and co-operated with the aggressive plans of Hitler fascism for German imperialist domination of the world. Just as the British bourgeoisie waxed fat and got rich on the African slave trade, so did the German monopolies during the Hitler period wax fat and get rich on the slave labour of the Nazi concentration camps.

Prosecution of Nazi war criminals in the FRG proceeded at a snail's pace and were few and far between. Former Gestapo and SS men, Nazi lawyers, Hitler generals and fascist teachers entered the FRG government, judicial system, diplomatic corps, the armed forces and educational institutions. From these positions in state and society they continued to promote the ideas of narrow and aggressive German nationalism.

With its founding the GDR expressed itself in favour of a united Germany on anti-Nazi, anti-militarist, peace and democratic principles. This idea did not find favour in the ruling circles of the FRG. Indeed the FRG's aim was to swallow the GDR and take over territory of other east European countries which formed the Third German Reich under Hitler fascism dominated by German monopoly capitalism. And this is the foundation on which narrow German nationalism and its west European allies are calling for a united Germany.

The FRG has never accepted the existence of the GDR as a sovereign independent state. It does not recognise GDR citizenship and passports. It continues to claim to represent all Germans not only those in the GDR but also ethnic Germans everywhere — east Europe, Namibia, South Africa, Latin America and elsewhere.

Psychological Warfare

In propagating the aggressive chauvinistic idea of a Greater Germany the FRG over the past 40 years has carried out an intense media psychological warfare campaign against the GDR as well as resorting to other acts of subversion. Much assistance has been rendered to the psychological warfare of the FRG against the GDR by the CIA financed RIAS Radio Station based in West Berlin.

Lurking behind the idea of a united Germany as a precondition for the realisation of a common European Market/Home is the intention to restore the borders of the former Third German Reich to serve the interests of the German monopolies and entrench the ideas of narrow German nationalism. In this way the German chauvinistic forces would achieve what the Hitler fascists had failed to gain by naked superman racism and aggression,

because this would put the German monopolies in a position of being the big boss and bully boy of Europe and at the same time put them in a commanding position on the world scene.

Stability and co-operation in Europe in place of confrontation must be fought for. In this regard the peace and democratic forces in the FRG are very active and are further strengthened by their counterparts the world over which include the GDR and other countries of east Europe.

Essential to good neighbourship, stability and co-operation in Europe are i) recognition of the existence of two German states; ii) good relations and mutual respect for each other's sovereignty by both German states; iii) an end to psychological warfare; iv) the free flow of valid information; and v) non-interference in each others' affairs.

In the complicated situation which is facing us today in examining issues it is important that we always ask — what serves peace, stability and co-operation on a world scale? At the same time we are obliged to vigorously combat all narrow nationalistic and ethnic manifestations both of which are dangerous weapons in the hands of reaction, racialism and aggression.

“The very events and vicissitudes of the struggle against capital, the defeats even more than the victories, could not help bringing home to men's minds the insufficiency of their various favourite nostrums and preparing the way for a more complete insight into the true conditions of working-class emancipation.”

Friedrich Engels — Preface to the English Edition of
The Communist Manifesto (1888)

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